METHODISM AND ANTI-CATHOLIC POLITICS, 1800-1846

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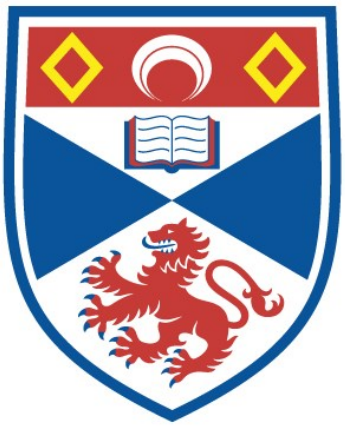

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Methodism and anti-Catholic politics 1800-1846.

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ABSTRACT

The growth of popular protestantism and the increased demands of Irish catholicism were two nineteenth century developments which would not take place without conflict. The high Churchmanship and Toryism of Wesley coupled with Methodist experiences in Ireland ensured that Wesleyans would not support concessions to the Irish Catholics. The remarkable numerical growth of Methodism in England only highlighted its apparent failure in Ireland when confronted by a surprisingly resilient Catholicism.

Most religious and social conflicts have political ramifications and this one was no exception. Battle lines were drawn over three important questions. Were Roman Catholics entitled to the same political rights as everyone else? What were the relative responsibilities of Church and State in the provision of education? What was to be the fate of protestantism in Ireland when it was in such a hopeless minority? In all of these questions Methodism and Roman Catholicism found themselves on completely opposite sides. As with later non-conformists the Wesleyans could not accept that what was theologically and morally wrong could ever be politically right. In response the Irish Catholics could appeal to the government for change in a country where the religion of the majority was politically and socially in subjection to the religion of the minority.

Methodism's allies were the Established Church and the Tory party, and both let them down. In the disappointment of political failure over the Maynooth Bill the Wesleyans reaffirmed their belief in religious methods by participating in the Evangelical Alliance. In spite of short term successes Methodism's political objectives were not achieved and participation in public affairs often produced connexional disharmony.

I certify that Mr. Hampton has fulfilled the Resolution of Court and the Regulations of Senate applicable to his thesis.

Supervisor

17 January 1977

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the following thesis is based on research carried out by me, that the thesis is my own composition, and that it has not previously been presented for a higher degree.

The research was carried out in the University of St. Andrews and elsewhere after my admission as a research student and Ph.D. candidate in October 1974.

Signed:

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INTRODUCTION

Halévy's view that Methodism saved England from revolution has been a kind of smoke screen in Methodist political history. The French historian's wide generalisation was bound to be challenged, and challenged it has been again and again. Almost all historians have admitted the Toryism of the Wesleys, and of the Wesleyan Connexion under Jabez Bunting's leadership to 1850, but no-one has completely followed Halévy's interpretation. E.J. Hobsbawm and E.P. Thompson have argued that the Tory Wesleyans were far too few to make a decisive difference. The former declares that radicalism and Methodism advanced at the same time, and that many Methodists, especially from the non-Wesleyan denominations, made a positive contribution to working-class leadership. The latter argues that religious revivalism took over at the point of political or temporal defeat and that it is foolish to describe the participation of rebellious Methodist lay preachers and others in extreme radical agitations as a 'Methodist contribution' to working-class politics. If Thompson's writing exhibits an intense anti-Methodism, R.F. Wearmouth has unashamedly fallen on the other side. He has tried to demonstrate that Methodist political neutrality was essential for self-preservation in the stormy radical waters of the early nineteenth century, while conveniently asserting that Methodist organisation and personnel were an example and a boost to working-class movements.

The old debate has been given a fresh impetus from two recent books, Robert Moore's Pitmen Preachers and Politics, and Bernard Semmel's The Methodist Revolution. Moore's work is a detailed study of the mining villages of the Deerness Valley in County Durham, and his

main theme is that "the effect of Methodism in a working-class community was to inhibit the development of class consciousness and reduce class conflict." He shows that coal owners and men had a common set of values, based on religious principles of co-operation and self-help, which was the perfect antidote to class tension. Moore's work is basically sociological whereas Semmel is primarily concerned with Methodist theology and its social and political consequences. Semmel sees the roots of Wesleyan Toryism in Wesley's High Church upbringing and in his conflict with the "speculative Antinomianism" of Calvinism. Although the subject matter of the two books is very different the conclusions are surprisingly similar. Methodism's dynamic energies were channelled into co-operation rather than confrontation, reform rather than revolution, so that, in Semmel's words, the consequences were "the most characteristic qualities of nineteenth-century England - its relative stability, its ordered freedom, and its sense of world mission."

Halévy's 'thesis' has exercised a powerful influence over Methodist historiography. It has become axiomatic to assume that the indirect effects of Methodism on society are more important than its actual political interests. The twentieth century mind rummages around in Wesleyan Methodism in an attempt to find its exact contribution, whether positive or negative, to working-class politics. The irony is that the Wesleyan leadership between 1800 and 1849 was only interested in radical politics insofar as they produced problems of connexional discipline. Wesleyan Toryism has become an accepted historical 'fact' but like most historical 'facts' it is much easier to state than to demonstrate.

Remarkably few have tried to come to terms with the political

behaviour of mainstream Wesleyanism as directed by the Conference and the metropolitan committees. One useful attempt was E.R. Taylor's book, Methodism and Politics 1791-1851. He recognised the link between conservatism in ecclesiastical doctrines and conservatism in secular politics. He also understood the peculiar position of Wesleyan Methodism half-way between Church and Dissent, described vividly as a piece of steel pulled between two magnets. However the book is marred by a strange step of reasoning. Taylor asserts that Methodist political attitudes have been misunderstood by a failure to see the importance of religious motives. He then implies that it was not until the second half of the nineteenth century, when Methodism and liberalism had been wedded, that Methodist participation in social and political affairs was important. Consequently he states that between 1791 and 1850 "It would be a mistake to look for the roots of contemporary Methodist conservatism in its attitude to contemporary issues." Therefore he virtually ignores the Wesleyan response to Catholic Emancipation, National Education and the Maynooth Bill. On the one hand Taylor recognised that religious principles were important in Methodist politics while on the other he refused to deal with those issues which most closely bore on religion.

John Kent in a chapter called Methodism and Politics in the nineteenth century in his book, The Age of Disunity, has fallen into errors of a different type, but the result is the same. He argues that the Toryism of Wesleyan Methodism has been over emphasised, referring to its neutrality over the Reform Bill and its opposition to Peel's ministry in the 1840s. He has chosen strange ground on which to stand. Of course the Wesleyans were neutral over the Reform Bill, but then

they were neutral on every matter of purely secular politics. Methodist opposition to Peel's ministry developed for two reasons. First, the Wesleyans could not support a system of Factory Education which gave control to a church infiltrated by the Oxford Movement. Second, the Wesleyans opposed Peel, not because they were becoming more liberal, but because the Tories were becoming more liberal toward Ireland. The political position of Wesleyan Methodism in the debate about Maynooth was not Toryism but Ultra-Toryism. What Kent has not fully realised is that the Wesleyan leadership supported the Tories because they seemed to be the best bulwark against the political claims of religious unorthodoxy. When those same Tories introduced measures favourable to a Church of England influenced by the Oxford Movement, to Socinian Dissent and to Roman Catholic Ireland, the Wesleyans terminated their conditional allegiance to the Tories. Right up to the Papal Aggression crisis the Methodists held out for the traditional concept of the Protestant Constitution. Like most Englishmen they had not fully realised the extent of the political ramifications as a result of the constitutional changes from 1828 to 1832. By the 1840s it was clear that no Government could conduct its administration on the principles of the Wesleyan Methodists, primarily because of the population statistics in Ireland. The seeds of the Maynooth Bill in 1845 were present in the passage of Catholic Emancipation in 1829, but it was the growth of the plant with its many stems which gave such pain to the Wesleyans. Support for the Protestant Constitution, a perfectly reasonable political position in the 1820s, had become ludicrous by the 1840s. In such circumstances Wesleyan consistency readily became Wesleyan extremism. Disillusionment with the Tory party was accompanied by disappointment in the theological direction

of the Church of England. As the real nature of the Oxford Movement became more apparent after 1838, the Wesleyan leadership realised that it could no longer support the Church as a whole. The enthusiastic churchmanship of the majority of the Anglican Evangelicals was also a source of bewilderment and frustration. By 1845 the twin pillars of Methodist political and religious orientation had crumbled. One can understand the attraction of the Evangelical Alliance with its religious orthodoxy and commitment to world mission.

W.R. Ward's recent books, Religion and Society in England 1790-1850, and the two volume correspondence of Jabez Bunting, have proved to be the most valuable contribution to an understanding of Methodist politics. His almost total reliance on primary sources has given his work a sure-footedness which many of the others patently lack. This thesis is indebted to some of the ideas which Ward has mentioned but could not develop because of the breadth of his topic. He realised that the role played by Ireland within British Wesleyanism was more important than the bare membership statistics reveal. He has also noted the importance of Methodist anti-catholicism in the educational debates from 1839 to 1847. H.F. Mathews' book, Methodism and the Education of the People, only devotes seven pages to these important years and completely fails to understand the reason for Methodist opposition to Graham's proposals in 1843.

The main purpose of this thesis is to add another dimension to the understanding of Wesleyan Toryism. Semmel has seen its origins in Wesley's Laudian High Churchmanship and non-revolutionary arminianism. Ward has shown that at the time of the French Revolution, the Methodists joined the Anglicans on the side of reaction while the reformers were

led by the dissenting intellectual elite, the Unitarians. He has also viewed Wesleyan Toryism within the context of evangelistic strategy. Methodism was growing by leaps and bounds after Wesley's death yet simultaneously it was losing its spontaneity. The centralised ecclesiastical bureaucracy only permitted expansion on certain terms; ministerial domination and no radicals. The Wesleyan leadership used strong discipline to remove ecclesiastical and social democrats. As a result the primitive energies of Methodism could only find expression in the seceding groups. Maldwyn Edwards has portrayed this tension in terms of an overlying Toryism which was always in control and an underlying liberalism which could only develop by secession. There were many sides to this overlying Toryism. At the time of the French Revolution the Methodists were keen to demonstrate their loyalty to the Government, partly out of the deep seated need to become a 'respectable' part of the religious life of the nation. Connexionalism, as a form of ecclesiastical government, is by nature less democratic than independent dissent and this fact was accentuated within Methodism by the growing alliance of itinerant ministers and wealthy chapel trustees. Conference control of Methodist publications, the growth of powerful metropolitan committees and the strong use of discipline all combined to convince the non-Methodist world that Wesleyan Methodism was Tory through and through. The remarkable personal influence of Jabez Bunting, that enthusiastic Tory who has been justifiably called the last Wesleyan, only served to confirm that impression.

This study also attempts to disentangle another thread in the complex web of Wesleyan Toryism - its anti-catholicism. This has not gone unnoticed but it has gone unexplored, perhaps because of the

confusion created by Bunting's advocacy of Catholic Emancipation in 1829. It has also been unfortunate that the studies of Irish Methodism have failed to take into account the wider British context. In spite of its scanty treatment it is possible to demonstrate that anti-catholicism was the most consistent principle in Methodist political involvement from Wesley's lifetime until 1846. One can begin with the effect of Ireland on Wesley's own view of Roman Catholicism which, contrary to the ecumenical bias of modern writing, was not very favourable. After Wesley's death, the Rebellion of the United Irishmen, the establishment of the Irish Methodist mission and the Act of Union, brought Ireland and Catholicism to the forefront of Wesleyan Methodist politics. The reports of the Irish missionaries, as the long weary battle for Catholic Emancipation developed, were fodder for the lay leaders of the Methodist Committee of Privileges, established in 1803. This study has brought together the manuscript correspondence in the Methodist Mission House, the Thomas Allan Collection in the Methodist Church Archives, and the Irish Wesleyan Historical Archives to build up a composite picture of the Methodist response to Catholic Emancipation. This extends and sheds new light on the debate begun by Halévy and carried on by Kent and Ward.

When Emancipation was finally conceded, Roman Catholic pressure and Wesleyan response focused on a new issue - education. The manuscript education reports from Ireland, now in the Methodist Mission House, reveal important information about the Methodist reaction to the national education proposals for Ireland. No-one has seen the real significance of Wesleyan attitudes in 1831-32 as a dress rehearsal for a much more extensive opposition in 1839. Some have realised that

something happened between the cautious and conditional approval of Brougham's scheme in 1821 and the outright opposition to the Whig policy in 1839, but the importance of the years 1831-32 in Ireland has not been appreciated.

The Watchman newspaper, instigated by the alliance of ministerial and lay Tories is a mine of information from 1835 onwards but it needs to be studied with caution. Although its political opinions did not win widespread acceptance within Wesleyanism, non-Methodists could be excused for thinking that it did. This is scarcely surprising since the party which dominated the Conference used the Watchman as its mouthpiece. The discovery of the previously unused manuscript minutes of the Committee of Privileges between 1835 and 1845 has provided a valuable new source on one of the best known but least understood aspects of Methodist history - the repeated switches of allegiance from Church to Dissent in the years 1839-1847. The most consistent thread running through these otherwise incomprehensible changes was the Methodist desire to achieve the most for themselves while excluding Roman Catholicism. The chapter on the Wesleyan reaction to Graham's proposals shows the effect of the Oxford Movement and demonstrates that the Methodists could act as a powerful extra-parliamentary pressure group. A.D. Gilbert's statistical research has shown that the three connexional agitations in 1839, 1843 and 1845 coincided with Wesleyan Methodism's numerical peak in proportion to the rest of society. This is borne out in parliamentary speeches in which politicians often derided Methodist prejudice but rarely belittled its influence.

Time has revealed the strange paradoxes of Methodist politics.

Surely no denomination showed such concern for the education of working people and yet its intensely sectarian position from 1839 onwards hindered the development of national education and inexorably made it more secular. No religious group had such an intense interest in Ireland and yet none suffered so much from the growth of Catholic nationalism. Some of O'Connell's bitterest words were reserved for the Wesleyans. Methodist support for the Church in its Protestant heyday rebounded on them as the Oxford Movement developed. The anglo-catholic clergy carried on a pamphlet feud with the Wesleyans in the early 1840s. Methodist support for the establishment principle in Ireland had a disastrous result when the Government decided to increase the endowment of Maynooth College. Methodist arguments for the preservation of Protestantism were weak in comparison with the Voluntaryists who could legitimately cry away with all endowments.

The peculiar religious and political position of Wesleyan Methodism sandwiched between the traditional forces of Church and Dissent presented insuperable problems especially since Church and Dissent were fluid entities. Each time the Methodists established themselves in this ecclesiastical version of the eternal triangle the other elements changed their character. Indeed it is possible to view Methodist politics, both inward and outward, as an attempt to find an identity within this traditional division. When Methodism ceased to be a revival and became an institution, the seeds of its future problems had already begun to germinate. A resurgent Irish Catholic nationalism only served to add the nutrients. Wesleyan Methodism is a good denominational vantage point from which to study the interaction of the two great religious trends in the early nineteenth century - a renascent popular

protestantism and a renascent Irish Catholicism.

To demonstrate the Wesleyan influence on national politics this thesis has had to make an assumption which is basically true but liable to be misunderstood. That assumption is that the Wesleyan Tories were so much in control of the connexional machinery that one must look to them for Methodism's effective political voice. That is not to say however that the hierarchy's toryism extended to the local roots which it patently did not. Nevertheless, in any highly structured organisation, what the man in the back seat thinks is less important, in political terms, than how his leaders direct and represent him. The secessions from Wesleyanism point out the dangers of an ultra strong leadership once the popular base has been eroded.

From Wesley's lifetime until 1850 the Methodists were consistent supporters of the traditional idea of the Protestant Constitution and therein lay the basis of their adherence to the Tory party. This adherence was only interrupted in 1811, when the Methodists were victims of jacobinical scaremongering, and in the 1840s when the Tories finally conceded that the numerical strength of Irish Catholicism warranted political and social expression. The Wesleyan leadership conducted a long and bitter rearguard action against Catholic political pressure, but as in all such campaigns, there was too high a price to pay in internal disharmony among Methodists and their deflection from religious revivalism to religious confrontation. This thesis is an attempt to understand the social, political and religious consequences of this conflict and in so doing it reveals the remarkable personal influence of one man - Jabez Bunting.

I

JOHN WESLEY AND ROMAN CATHOLICISM

> "Because it expresses so simply and so effectively the main features of the ecumenical movement as recommended by Church leaders today and, as far as Roman Catholics are concerned, by the Second Vatican Council and Pope Paul VI, John Wesley's Letter to a Roman Catholic cannot be but a welcome source of inspiration and encouragement to all, both the ecumenically committed and the ecumenically diffident, ..." [1]

> "As I have come to know Wesley I have believed him to be there (in Heaven, with the Saints) and have prayed to God through him - ..." [2]

> "In these days of the ecumenical movement our vision may be larger than that of Wesley but our guiding principle must always remain his: collaboration according to conscience." [3]

> "Wesley, as a consequence of his early High Church Arminian loyalties, as well as, no doubt, because of the vulnerability of Methodism, became a champion of both civil and religious liberty ..." [4]

Modern scholarship has changed John Wesley from an "enthusiast" and a "firebrand"[5] into a significant precursor of the ecumenical movement. This new[6] attitude arises from two major impulses; one is a growth of ecumenical spirit within the churches and the other is the increasing need of the churches in Ireland to make a positive and effective

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1 Augustin Cardinal Bea, President, Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity in a Preface to John Wesley's Letter to a Roman Catholic, Michael Hurley S.J. (Ed).

2 J.M. Todd, John Wesley and the Catholic Church (1958), p.192.

3 Michael Hurley S.J., op.cit., p.48.

4 B. Semmel, The Methodist Revolution (1974), p.89.

5 W.J. Amherst S.J., The History of Catholic Emancipation 1771-1820 (1886), i. p.147.

6 Later in the chapter the writings of Roman Catholics, in the nineteenth century, on John Wesley will be considered.

contribution to reconciliation. Hurley, in his editor's preface to John Wesley's Letter to a Roman Catholic, reveals that the idea "Came to me on my way back to Dublin from the World Methodist Conference at London in August 1966." [7] It was this desire for understanding and reconciliation which stimulated Frederick Jeffery to deliver a lecture entitled 'Methodism and the Irish Religious Situation' to the Wesley Historical Society at Sunderland in 1973. This lecture became a book in which the author concludes:

> "The story of Methodism's relations to the other denominations in Ireland is more and more part of the modern development that maintains our difference [sic] are not as important as that which we can all hold in common. In this modern development is seen the recognition of the spiritual principlies of unity, so well expressed by John Wesley in his sermon on the Catholic Spirit and in his Letter to a Roman Catholic." [8]

This approach to history selects its material to support a thesis stimulated by modern demands. In these modern writings the "real Wesley" is discerned in his tolerant writings while his anti-Catholic statements merely reveal him to be "a child of his age". [9] C.S. Lewis saw the dangers of this approach when he tried to come to terms with Milton's Paradise Lost:

> "A method often recommended may be called the method of The Unchanging Human Heart. According to this method the things which separate one age from another are superficial. Just as, if we stripped the armour off a medieval knight or the lace off a Caroline courtier, we should find beneath them an anatomy identical with our own, so, it is held, if we strip off from Virgil his Roman imperialism, from Sidney his code of honour, from Lucretius his Epicurean philosophy, and from all who have it their religion, we shall find the Unchanging Human Heart...". [10]

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7 Hurley, op.cit., Editor's Preface.

8 F. Jeffrey. Methodism and the Irish Problem (1973), p.34.

9 Ibid., p.1.

10 C.S. Lewis, A Preface to Paradise Lost (1942), p.61.

One is tempted to add that if Wesley's basic distrust of Roman Catholicism is removed then what is left must be ecumenical in spirit. Perhaps we should follow the implications of Traherne's statement that "Men do mightily wrong themselves when they refuse to be present in all ages."[11] To have a right understanding of Wesley's attitude to Roman Catholicism is important, not only for an appreciation of his life, but also to see the tradition which nineteenth century Wesleyanism was following. If the modern judgment on Wesley is accepted then it is clear that nineteenth century Methodism departed from the principles and attitudes held by its founder.

It is worthwhile first to understand the basis of Wesley's tolerance in his theology. Wesley has been described as an "heir" to "High Church Arminianism." [12] Increasingly this became an evangelical Arminianism which was clearly distinct from the pervading Calvinism of evangelical protestants in the eighteenth century. Knox states that "all the great names of early Evangelicalism, Whitfield, Venn, Berridge, Rowland Hill, Romaine and the others take the Calvinistic side." [13] Toplady and Whitfield accused Wesley of Popery for clinging so tenaciously to Arminianism. Neither this nor his doctrine of Sanctification were far removed from traditional Roman Catholic belief. The strand of mysticism in Wesley's religion is another obvious point of contact with Roman Catholicism. "I confess I cherish the belief that there was in Wesley something of the mystic," says Knox, "that his bent, if Providence had not seen fit to order his career otherwise, was towards a solitary, a

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11 Ibid., p.1.

12 Semmel, op.cit., p.82.

13 R.A. Knox, Enthusiasm. A Chapter in the History of Religion with special reference to the XVII and XVIII centuries (1950), p.457.

contemplative life. He almost admits as much in the well-known letter he wrote to his brother Charles in 1772: " 'Vitae me redde priori! Let me again be an Oxford Methodist' ".[14] Wesley therefore had a high regard for several Roman Catholic mystical writers, and found a place for them in his 'Christian library'. In a letter pleading for unity among Church of England ministers, he wrote "I went upstairs, and after a little prayer opened Kempis on these words: Expecta Dominum: Viriliter age: Noli diffidere: Noli discedere; sed corpus et animam expone constanter pro gloria Dei".[15] In a letter to his nephew Samuel, Wesley advised him to "carefully read over Kempis, the Life of Gregory Lopez and that of Mons. de Renty".[16] Indeed De Renty is described in the Journal as "one of the brightest patterns of heavenly wisdom."[17]

Methodists and Roman Catholics were most often bracketed together as enthusiasts. George Lavington, Bishop of Exeter from 1746 to 1762, wrote his famous work, The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared,[18] in three parts. He tried to establish that the "whole conduct of the Methodists is but a counterpart of the most wild fanaticisms of Popery".[19]

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14 Ibid., p.433.

15 Letters, IV. p.239. The quotation of Kempis is from Imitation, III. XXXV. 3: "Wait for the Lord. Quit thyself like a man. Yield not to distrust. Be unwilling to depart (desert); but constantly expose body and soul for the Glory of God."

16 Letters, VIII. p.171.

17 Journal, 6 Jan. 1738.

18 G. Lavington. The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared Parts 1 and 2 were written in 1749, part 3 in 1751. The three parts were published together in 1754.

19 Letters, III. p.295. Quoted from Lavington. op.cit., Preface to the first part. p.3.

Wesley took the allegations seriously,[20] and entered into a protracted written controversy with the Bishop.[21] In the Anglican mind the charge of enthusiasm was closely linked with that of Antinomianism, a charge which the Methodists frequently threw back to the Calvinists. Edmund Gibson, the Bishop of London, issued a number of queries to the Methodists in his Observations upon the Conduct and Behaviour of a Certain Sect, Usually distinguished by the Name of Methodists.[22] His first query asks "Whether Notions in Religion may not be heighten'd to such Extremes, as to lead some into a Disregard of Religion itself, through dispair of attaining such exalted Heights? And whether others, who have imbib'd those Notions, may not be led by them into a Disregard and Disesteem of the common Duties and Offices of Life."[23] Wesley strenuously opposed this charge of Antinomianism, declaring that he had "earnestly opposed" such doctrines and "did never teach or embrace them."[24] The supposed link between Methodism and Roman Catholicism was not an easy one for Wesley to shake off. As late as 1768 Francis Blackburne, collated to the archdeaconry of Cleveland in July 1750, could write that "The Popish party boast much of the increase of the Methodists, and talk of that sect with rapture. How far the Methodists and Papists stand connected in Principles I know not; but I believe it

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20 R. Southey, Life of Wesley (1864). He writes: "In all his other controversies, Wesley preserved that urbane and gentle tone, which arose from the genuine benignity of his disposition and manners; but he replied to Bishop Lavington with asperity; the attack had galled him." p.451.

21 Letters, III. pp.259-271. pp.295-331.

22 Probably written in 1740.

23 English Historical Documents, X. p.389.

24 Letters, II. p.279.

is beyond a doubt that they are in constant correspondence with each other."[25]

It was in his Arminianism, mysticism and enthusiasm, and his positive emphasis on good works, that Wesley came closest to Catholic theology. However, these were not the only elements predisposing him to a tolerant view of Roman Catholicism. In his correspondence with his nephew Samuel, Wesley appears to hurdle secondary doctrinal differences in order to strike at the root of the problem. He is at pains to assert the superiority of a religion of the heart based upon a knowledge of Christ, regardless of theological systems. Samuel, who at one stage openly avowed his adherence to the Church of Rome[26], is told by his uncle that, "I have often been pained for you, fearing you did not set out the right way; I do not mean with regard to this or that set of opinions, Protestant or Romish (all these I trample under-foot); but with regard to those weightier matters, wherein, if they go wrong, either Protestants or Papists will perish everlastingly. I feared you were not born again."[27] Wesley was not stating that doctrine was unimportant, but rather that it is subsidiary to the central issue. He says as much at the end of the letter: "If you have no better work, I will talk with you of transubstantiation or purgatory".[28] Less than a year before his death, Wesley reiterated his advice to Samuel to seek "the religion of the heart."[29]

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25 Quoted by F. Baker, "Methodism and the '45 Rebellion", The London Quarterly and Holborn Review, Oct. 1947. pp.325-333.

26 Cf. Letters, VII. p.230 for the circumstances which led up to Samuel's decision, and his later denunciation of the Church of Rome.

27 Ibid., VII. p.230.

28 Ibid., VII. p.231.

29 Ibid., VIII. p.218.

An influential factor in Wesley's relations with other religious groups was his genuine aversion to violence and persecution. In this restricted sense he was a man of the Enlightenment, although he was certainly not committed to the dominant thought of the period.[30] His dislike of persecuting violence stimulated his letter to a Roman Catholic on 18 July 1749,[31] written on his third visit to Ireland. The letter must be understood against the background of the Cork riots, instigated by a certain Nicholas Butler, (an eccentric ballad singer), throughout the month of May 1749. The aim, therefore, was probably to remove common misunderstandings about the Methodists and also to make a plea for mutual love and toleration. The letter begins by setting the boundaries within which such a toleration should exist:

> "I do not suppose all the bitterness is on your side. I know there is too much on our side also; so much, that I fear many Protestants (so called) will be angry at me too, for writing to you in this manner; and will say, 'It is showing you too much; you deserve no such treatment at our hands.' But I think you do. I think you deserve the tenderest regard I can show, were it only because the same God hath raised you and me from the dust of the earth, and has made us both capable of loving and enjoying him to eternity; were it only because the Son of God has bought you and me with his own blood. How much more, if you are a person fearing God, (as without question many of you are,) and studying to have a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man?" [32]

The writer gives a brief statement of Christian belief, a lowest common multiple which both Protestant and Roman Catholic could accept. The letter reaches its climax in four resolutions; "not to hurt one another"; "to speak nothing harsh or unkind of each other"; "to harbour no unkind thought,"and "to endeavour to help each other on in whatever we are

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30 Semmel, op.cit., pp.87-96.

31 Works, X. pp.80-86.

32 Ibid., X. pp.80-81.

agreed leads to the kingdom."[33] The final plea is a call for personal salvation:

> "Let us count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord; being ready for him to suffer the loss of all things and counting them but dung, that we may win Christ." [34]

It is small wonder that this letter has attracted the attention of those attempting to demonstrate the ecumenical principles undergirding Wesley's theology. However, it is important to understand the occasion for which it was written, and to place it in the context of Wesley's other writings, if a distorted picture is not to emerge. Nevertheless, this basic aversion to persecution is a consistent and prominent theme in his works. In a Letter to the Printer of the Public Advertiser Wesley wrote: "With persecution I have nothing to do. I persecute no man for his religious principles. Let there be as 'boundless a freedom in religion' as any man can conceive."[35] Wesley gives a fuller explanation of his tolerance in a little pamphlet entitled A Word to a Protestant:

> "Now this [persecution] strikes at the Root of, and utterly tears up, the Second Great Commandment. It directly tends to bring in blind, bitter zeal; Anger, Hatred, Malice, Variance; every Temper, Word and Work that is just contrary to the loving our Neighbour as ourselves." [36]

This is the crux of the issue. Persecution is an offence against love as defined in Christ's two great commandments. For Wesley love does not mean surrendering one's opinions but it does mean " a union in affection".[37]

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33 Ibid., X. pp.85-86.

34 Ibid., X. p.86.

35 Ibid., X. p.159. This letter was written in support of a pamphlet entitled 'An appeal from the Protestant Association, to the people of Great Britain,' and against political concessions to Roman Catholics.

36 Wesley, A Word to a Protestant (1745), p.2.

37 Sermons, I. XXXIX on Catholic Spirit, pp.490-501.

It is put succinctly in a sermon on Catholic Spirit; "Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike?"[38] This emphasis leads Hunter to conclude his book, entitled, John Wesley and the Coming Comprehensive Church, with these words:

> "One can point to his trinity of values - holiness or universal love as supreme, faith and unity - and ask, 'Must he wait for the twenty-first century for that reunion of Protestantism which he believed could hasten the Mission of his beloved Lord to all mankind?' " [39]

This aversion to persecution affected Wesley's attitude to Roman Catholicism, by directing his hostility to the Catholic Church and its representatives rather than to individual Roman Catholics. This might seem a spurious distinction but it is an important one, especially in the evangelical mind. Hatred of a theological system must not become hatred of its adherents, if the great principle of universal love is to be maintained. By its very nature, the distinction is more easily held in theory than in practice. Nevertheless Wesley made an earnest attempt to put the theory into practice. On his fifth visit to Ireland in 1752, he records in his journal a sermon preached at Abidarrig:

> "Many Romanists being present, I found much concern for them, and could not but address myself to them in particular, and exhort them to rely on the one Mediator between God and man." [40]

There are, therefore, many threads predisposing Wesley to a tolerant view of Roman Catholicism; the three strands of Arminianism, mysticism and enthusiasm; the firm preaching against Antinomianism and the consequent emphasis on works; the superiority of an inward personal religion over a

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38 Ibid.

39 F. Hunter, John Wesley and the Coming Comprehensive Church (1968), p.112.

40 Journal, 4 Aug. 1752.

system of dry orthodoxy; the apparent lack of distinction between justification and sanctification; the Enlightenment aversion to violent persecution and finally the insistence on Christ's two great commandments on love. In spite of this, nineteenth century Methodist anti-Catholicism was not a departure from the life of Wesley but rather a natural consequence of its founder's principles.

Wesley's letter to a Roman Catholic Priest in 1739 indicates the tension in his mind over Catholicism. The letter was written to a priest who had submitted some proposals of the late Rector of Epworth to the Sorbonne in the University of Paris. Anti-Catholicism is in evidence throughout the letter in spite of the sentence "Yet I can by no means approve the scurrility and contempt with which the Romanists have often been treated."[41] Later in the letter he casts severe doubts upon salvation within the Roman Catholic Church:

> "But I pity them Romanists much; having the same assurance that Jesus is the Christ, and that no Romanist can expect to be saved according to the terms of His covenant. For thus saith our Lord 'Whosoever shall break one of the least of these commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven' And, 'if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book'. But all Romanists as such do both." [42]

Wesley attempts to prove the first charge by demonstrating that the Roman Catholic behaviour towards images is a breach of God's commands. The second is 'proved' by enumerating ten Catholic additions to the "Book of Life".[43] It is therefore worthwhile to ask what it was

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41 Letters, I. p.277.

42 Ibid., I. p.278.

43 Ibid., I. pp.278-279. - Wesley lists ten such additions:
"1. Seven sacraments;
2. Transubstantiation;
3. Communion in one kind only;
4. Purgatory and praying for the dead therein;
5. Praying to saints;
6. Veneration of relics;
7. Worship of images;
8. Indulgences;
9. The priority and universality of the Roman Church;
10. The supremacy of the Bishop of Rome."

during Wesley's lifetime that provoked anti-Catholicism. There were at least five major causes and only one of them ceased to be important for early nineteenth century Wesleyanism.

The first could be described as the reaction to reaction. Remarkably, one of Lavington's accusations against the Methodists was that they were Romanists. This charge was partly based on theological similarities, partly on Wesley's activities in Georgia and partly on the fact that "The movement had the misfortune to make its first, well-publicised appearance in many areas during the Jacobite scare of the 1740's."[44] There were fanciful rumours in circulation linking the Methodists with the Jacobites:

> "In 1741 the rumour was going round London that Wesley 'kept two popish priests in his house', and was being paid by Spain (which country had been at war with England for two years) to raise an army of 20,000 in support of an intended Spanish invasion." [45]

In March 1744, immediately after the declaration of war on France, the situation worsened considerably for the Methodists. Many preachers were either press-ganged or imprisoned. David Sant, John Dounes and John Nelson survived their ordeals but Thomas Beard died as a result of his impressment. Although the charges against the Methodists were contradictory[46] and irrational, the violence they inspired forced Wesley to take them seriously. In February 1744, Wesley records in his journal that "Mon 27 was the day I had appointed to go out of town; but understanding a proclamation was just published, requiring all Papists to go out of London before the Friday following, I was

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44 J. Walsh, 'Methodism and the Mob in the Eighteenth Century' in Studies in Church History, Vol. 8 - Popular Belief and Practice. Edited by G.J. Cuming and Derek Baker, pp.213-227.

45 F. Baker, op.cit.

46 Walsh shows that the Methodists were attacked by Irish Catholics who feared them as ultra-Protestants while others thought they were popishly inclined. op.cit., p.226.

determined to stay another week, that I might cut off all occasion of reproach."[47]

Wesley felt strongly enough about these serious misunderstandings to draft a letter to the King. The content of this letter, which was never sent, shows how Wesley was driven to condemn the Church of Rome in order to maintain his own loyalty. He states that "we detest and abhor the fundamental doctrines of the Church of Rome, and are steadily attached to your Majesty's royal person and illustrious house."[48] On occasions, both Charles and John were required to take oaths of loyalty.[49] Methodists were the scapegoats for those who desired to demonstrate their loyalty in an aggressive manner.

In the face of these unwarranted charges the Methodists were forced to show their antipathy to the Church of Rome; reaction was producing reaction. In 1745, Wesley produced A Word to a Protestant in pamphlet form. In the eighth edition[50] of this short work, there were three hymns attached to the end. The writer was almost certainly Charles Wesley[51] and it was likely that John shared the strongly anti-Catholic sentiments contained in them:

Hymn 1 - Verse 2: "Oh how shall I presume
Jesus, to call on thee
Sunk in the lowest Dregs of Rome,
The worst Idolatry."

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47 Journal, 27 Feb. 1744.

48 Journal, 5 Mar. 1744.

49 Baker, op.cit., pp.326-327.

50 Wesley, A Word to a Protestant (8th Ed London, 1745). That it went to so many editions in one year, is an indication of its popularity.

51 Cf. M. Edwards, John Wesley and the Eighteenth Century (1955), p.101.

Hymn 1 - Verse 4: "Foe to the Popish Boast
No Merit was in me
Yet in my Works I put my Trust
And not alone in Thee."

Hymn 2 - Verse 3: "Let the blind Sons of Rome bow down
To Images of Wood and Stone;
But I with subtler Art
Safe from the Letter of thy Word
My Idols secretly ador'd
Set up within my Heart."

Hymn 3 - Verse 9: "How vainly then the Zealots blind
Of Rome I did disclaim
Still to the Church of Satan join'd
And diff'ring but in Name!"

Verse 12: "A Murderer convict I come
My Vileness to bewail
By Nature born a Son of Rome
A Child of Wrath and Hell.

Verse 13: "Lord, I at last recant, reject
(Thro' Jesus Strength alone)
The Madness of the Romish Sect
The Madness of my own." [52]

In the pamphlet, Wesley attempts to show the major areas of disagreement between Protestants and Catholics. Once again the tone is hostile to Roman Catholicism:

> "So plain it is, that these Grand Popish Doctrines of Merit, Idolatry and Persecution, by destroying both Faith and the Love of God and of our Neighbour, tend to banish True Christianity out of the World." [53]

In view of the bitter persecutions incurred by the supposed connection of his followers with Rome, Wesley's firmness is understandable if not commendable. The association with Romanism and anti-national Jacobitism forced the Methodists to over react to demonstrate their Protestantism and their loyalty. The failure of the Jacobite rebellion in 1745 did not fully remove the link between Catholicism and Methodism as Lavington took up the same theme in 1749 and Blackburne followed in 1768. However, the

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52 Wesley, A Word to a Protestant, pp.7-12.

53 Ibid., p.4.

charge of Jacobitism became less important as Jacobitism itself declined and by the nineteenth century it was obvious that the Methodists were far from pro-Catholic. The stigma was effectively removed, but it was lost at a price.

The Methodists were forced to define their faith more closely by controversy. It is self-evident that controversy, especially in theological debate tends to drive the disputants into rigid codes of belief. Methodists in the eighteenth century, and to a greater degree in the nineteenth, frequently engaged in disputes with Roman Catholics.[54] Richard Challoner[55], who wrote A Caveat Against the Methodists was probably the most reputable Roman Catholic to engage the Methodists. He spent twenty-six years of his early life at Douay, where he was Professor of Divinity and later Vice-President of the College. After leaving Douay, he joined the London Mission and, on the death of Dr Petre in 1758, he became Vicar-Apostolic of the London district. The leaders of the mob during the Gordon Riots made him an object of attack, but fortunately he was hidden and protected by a friend. A Caveat against the Methodists is an attempt to show that, "The Methodists are not the People of God: they are not true Gospel Christians: nor is their new-raised Society the true Church of Christ, or any part of it."[56] He states that the Methodist teachers cannot be true ministers of Christ because they do not "come down from the Apostles of Christ."

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54 For 18th Century C.F. Anon. A Word to a Protestant Answered, also Richard Challoner, Caveat against the Methodists: showing "How unsafe it is for any Christian to join himself to their Society, or to adhere to their Teachers."

55 D.N.B.

56 Challoner, op.cit., A.2.

Consequently Methodist doctrine must also be in error, since the source of true authority has effectively been removed. Wesley replied to this attack in a letter to the Editor of the London Chronicle. He rightly pointed out, that although Challoner singled out the Methodists, the same argument could be used against all of the Protestant denominations. Wesley refuted the charges by renouncing publicly for the first time,[57] the idea of an uninterrupted Apostolical Succession:

> "I deny that the Romish bishops came down by uninterrupted succession from the Apostles. I never could see it proved; and I am persuaded I never shall. But unless this is proved, your own pastors on your own principles are no pastors at all." [58]

Wesley devoted considerable time to other writings, showing the superiority of Protestantism over Catholicism and carefully delineating the opposing doctrines.[59] This type of close definition sets up obstacles which are difficult to overcome.

Wesley's attitude to Roman Catholicism was also strongly influenced by Ireland, which provided an easily accessible historical mythology of Romish Persecution. The Methodist founder, in the course of his lifetime, made twenty-one visits to Ireland and that in itself is a testimony to the value he placed on the propagation of the Gospel to the Irish. The Methodists looked upon the large Irish Catholic population as a missionary challenge. Wesley lost no time in acquainting himself with the history of this missionary battlefield. On his first visit in 1747 he records his initial readings in Irish history:

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57 Hunter, op.cit., p.75.

58 Letters, IV. p.140.

59 Cf. A Roman Catechism, Works, X. pp.86-128.
The Advantage of the Members of the Church of England over those of the Church of Rome, Works, X. p.133-140.
Popery Calmly Considered, Works, X. pp.140-158.

> "I procured a genuine account of the great Irish massacre in 1641.[60] Surely never was there such a transaction before, from the beginning of the world! More than two hundred thousand men, women and children butchered within a few months in cold blood, and with such circumstances of cruelty as make one's blood run cold! It is well if God has not a controversy with the nation, on this very account, to this day." [61]

On his seventh visit in 1758, while travelling on the road from Kilcock to Edinderry he read

> "Mr Walker's account of the siege of Londonderry, and the relation of that of Drogheda, by Dr Bernard, a vain, childish, affected writer. Sir Henry Titchburn's account of that siege, is wrote in a strong and masculine manner, and is worthy to be joined with Mr Walker's plain and clear account of that other amazing scene of Providence."[62]

The next day it is followed up by

> "an account of the Irish rebellion, wrote by Dr Curry, a Papist of Dublin, who labours to wash the Ethiop white, by numberless falsehoods and prevarications; but he is treated according to his merit by Mr Harris, in a tract entitled, 'Fiction Unmasked' ".[63]

From the manner in which Wesley writes it is clear that he came to the subject with less than an open mind, and his reading substantially reinforced his views on Romanist persecutions. This biased historical writing naturally concentrated upon the Irish rebellion in the 1640s and the Williamite wars 1688-1690. For the nineteenth century Methodists, a new and powerful focal point was provided by the Rebellion of the United Irishmen in 1798.[64] This type of historical mythology acting upon a mind already conditioned to receive it, has an extremely potent effect in generating bigotry. Wesley, as a convinced Anglican would already have been fed on the persecuting tendencies of

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60 Curnock states that this account was by Sir John Temple, Master of the Rolls, and was published in London in 1646. Journal, iii. p.314.

61 Ibid., 14 Aug. 1747.

62 Ibid., 25 Apr. 1758.

63 Ibid., 25 Apr. 1758.

64 Cf. An Extract of a Letter to Mr William Thompson, from a Gentleman in Ireland (London 1798). Chapter II will examine the effect of this rebellion on the Methodists.

the Roman Church. The pre-Reformation, Roman Catholic Councils, especially Hus' execution at the Council of Constance, details of Continental Catholicism, The St Bartholomew's Day Massacre, the activities of the Jesuits, the Marian persecutions and the Papal Bull against Elizabeth I, had come to form an emotive historical distrust of Roman Catholicism.[64b] The eighteenth century concept of time in the historical process is rather different from today's. For an eighteenth century Protestant, the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre was no obscure historical event two centuries in the past, but a comparatively recent memorial to the unchanging, persecuting spirit of the Roman Catholic Church. Widespread illiteracy ensured that minds were receptive in this respect, especially when deep-seated prejudices were aroused.

Wesley and the Methodists believed that, what was true of the Roman Church in the past, would be true in the present and would continue to be so in the future. Hence he could write -

> "I preached at Manulla, a village four miles from Castlebar. I was surprised to find how little the Irish Papists are changed in a hundred years. Most of them retain the same bitterness, yea, and thirst for blood, as ever, and would as freely now cut the throats of all the Protestants, as they did in the last century." [65]

Unfortunately, his opinions were reinforced when he was occasionally attacked by Roman Catholic mobs in Ireland. On a trip from Longford to Drumersnave Wesley records that he was "encompassed with a multitude of Papists, coming out of their mass-house. One of them knowing me soon alarmed the rest, who set up a hideous roar, and drew up in battle-array."[66]

64b Cf. Appendix.

65 Journal, 3 June 1758.

66 Ibid., 24 June 1760.

In spite of this comment, the Journal seems to suggest that the Methodists in Ireland were subject to no more persecution than their counterparts in England. Wesley, to his credit, was not so narrow that he could not recognise good behaviour among Roman Catholics as at Ahascragh, "where the bulk of the congregation were Papists. Yet the decency of their behaviour was such as might have made many Protestants ashamed."[67] The Journal records fewer incidents of Methodist persecution, at Catholic hands, as it progresses, and perhaps hatred between Methodists and Catholics would have abated in time. The rebellion of the United Irishmen and the Catholic nationalism of Daniel O'Connell ensured that the hostility would continue into the nineteenth century.

Most of the Methodist anti-Catholicism in Ireland was directed at the priests of the Church of Rome and not the native population. Wesley, and his followers, looked upon the inhabitants of Ireland as victims of a delusion, perpetrated by the Roman priesthood. Ignoring the irrational elements in this hostility, one can detect two basic reasons for it. The Methodists could understand that an illiterate and ignorant peasantry would be strangers to the truth but they could not understand or forgive their educated representatives continuing in error. More significantly, the control by priests of their flocks was a barrier to the Methodist missionary enterprise. Wesley gives an example of their opposition when he visited Athlone in 1748:

> "I preached again at six in the same place and to nearly the same (only a little larger) congregation; the greater part whereof, notwithstanding the prohibition of their priests, I afterwards found were Papists." [68]

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67 Ibid., 6 June 1760.

68 Ibid., 3 Apr. 1748.

Wesley was not so lucky a week later in the same place when "Abundance of Papists flocked to hear so that the (poor) priest, seeing his command did not avail (seeing he profited nothing) came in person at six, and drove them away before him like a flock of sheep."[69]

Wesley expressed his sadness at the strength of the Catholic Church in A Short Method of Converting All the Roman Catholics in the Kingdom of Ireland.[70]

> "It is a melancholy consideration to those who love the Protestant interest that so small a part of this nation is yet reformed from Popery. They cannot observe without a very sensible concern, that, in many parts of the kingdom, there are still ten, nay, fifteen perhaps upwards of twenty, Papists to one Protestant." [71]

In his third paragraph, Wesley comes to the root of the problem as he saw it:

> "But why should we imagine it is to be impossible? A common and plausible answer is, because the Papists are so bigoted to their clergy; believing all that they affirm, however contrary both to scripture and reason and doing all that they direct, whom they generally believe to be the holiest and wisest of men. Undoubtedly this is a considerable difficulty in the way." [72]

The author saw the solution in a revitalised Church of Ireland Clergy, living and preaching in an apostolic manner. Neither Wesley, nor the nineteenth century Methodists minimised the value of the Protestant established Church in Ireland as a bulwark against Roman Catholicism. In the nineteenth century when this Church was under attack, the Methodists were among its stoutest defenders.

One can detect a conviction, beginning with Wesley and cherished

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69 Ibid., 10 Apr. 1748. There are many other references to priestly interference e.g. 25 June 1756. 4 July 1756. 22 May 1760.

70 Works, X. pp.129-133.

71 Ibid., p.129.

72 Ibid., pp.129-130.

still more strongly by later Methodists, that Roman Catholicism not only caused the religious and political problems of Ireland but also the economic distress of the country. When writing about the common Irish cabins he stated that one "might imagine Saturn still reigned here: ... for no light can come into the earth or straw-built cavern, on the master and the his cattle, but at one hole, which is both window, chimney and door."[73] On his sixth visit to Ireland in 1776, Wesley recorded the dramatic difference in living conditions between the heavily Roman Catholic South and the more densely Protestant province of Ulster: "No sooner did we enter Ulster than we observed the difference. The ground was cultivated just as in England, and the cottages not only neat, but with doors, chimneys and windows."[74]

When the condition of Ireland became a major concern in the years preceding the famine, the Methodists in England and Ireland were convinced that the propagation of the Gospel was the proper solution. This was not purely wishful thinking since the English Methodists were not slow to take credit for the improvement of the living conditions of working-class Methodists during the early stages of the industrial revolution.

Wesley, and his later followers entertained a very real belief that given the opportunity the Catholics in Ireland would be disloyal. The continental dimension to the Irish rebellion in the 1640s and the Williamite wars indicated that Irish Roman Catholics could be disloyal to the British Crown. After a century of Protestant ascendancy, undergirded by severe penal laws, the American war was a renewed test of

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73 Journal, 4 May 1748.

74 Ibid., 19 July 1756.

Catholic loyalty. The demands of the war resulted in a reduced military presence in Ireland. There was no militia; for although a militia act was passed in 1778, the government had no funds to implement it. The entry of France into the war, and the activities of the American privateer, Paul Jones, were powerful stimuli to a growing Protestant Volunteer movement. The first volunteer groups had been formed as early as 1776 and were predominantly Protestant since Roman Catholics were not permitted to carry arms. The Volunteers in general, although initially suspicious of Roman Catholics, were by no means anti-Catholic, especially as the movement developed politically. Wesley came in contact with them when he visited Ireland in 1778:

> "At St Peter's Church (Cork) I saw a pleasing sight, the Independent Companies, raised by private persons associating together, without any expense to the Government. They exercised every day; and, if they answer no other end, at least keep the Papists in order, who are exceedingly alert ever since the army was removed to America." [75]

Wesley's distrust was given real substance, in the eyes of his followers at least, when Wolfe Tone solicited French help in the 1790s. Political concessions to, or political demands from, Roman Catholics stimulated Methodist anti-Catholicism.

The supreme example of this in Wesley's lifetime was occasioned by the Relief Act introduced by Sir George Savile in May 1778.[76] Savile's Act repealed certain provisions of the Act For the further preventing the growth of Popery in William III's reign. The clauses, relating to

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75 Ibid., 26 Apr. 1778.

76 There were two quite separate Relief Acts introduced in 1778:

(i) Sir George Savile's Act for the Relief of Roman Catholics. (Statutes at Large, XXXII. pp.152-154, 18 Geo III, cap 60)

(ii) Catholic Relief Act, 1778 (applying to Ireland) (Statutes at Large passed in the Parliaments held in Ireland, XI. (1782), pp.248-301. 17 and 18 Geo III, C.49).

the apprehending of Popish bishops, priests and Jesuits, which subjected these and also Papists keeping a school, to perpetual punishment, were repealed. In order for this act to take effect, Catholics had to take a special oath abjuring the Pretender, the temporal jurisdiction and deposing power of the Pope, the doctrine that faith should not be kept with heretics and that heretics may be lawfully put to death. Predictably, Wesley was firmly opposed to the Act but he had always been reluctant to take a public part in political disputes. In a letter to a friend in 1768 he summed up this attitude:

> "You desire me to give you my thoughts freely on the present state of public affairs. But do you consider? I am no politician; politics lie quite out of my province. Neither have I any acquaintance, at least no intimacy, with any that bear that character." 77

For Wesley the 1778 Act was not "out of my province" since he regarded it fundamentally as a religious issue. The nineteenth century Wesleyans also regarded the crusade against Roman Catholicism as a religious one, even if some of the most significant battles had to be fought on the political stage. There was an inherent flaw in this reasoning. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there could be no rigid distinctions between religious and political issues. One continuing theme of Methodist politics up to 1849 is a campaign against further concessions to the Roman Catholic population of Great Britain. The Methodists did not concede that this was 'dabbling in politics', like taking part in overtly political disputes such as the Reform Bill or the repeal of the Corn Laws. Be that as it may, the twin elements of Roman Catholicism and Ireland, to the politicians at least, were significant political issues. The Methodists either did not understand, or pretended not to understand,

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77 Letters, V. pp.370-371.

that anti-Catholicism and Irish affairs were matters of secular politics. Perhaps this is the key to comprehending how a Committee of Privileges set up in 1803 to protect Methodist interests, could, by 1845, throw its full weight against the Maynooth Bill.[78]

The beginning of this process can be found in Wesley's attitude to Savile's Act of 1778. The initial breach was Wesley's letter to the Printer of the Public Advertiser in January 1780:

> "Some time ago a pamphlet was sent me, entitled 'An Appeal from the Protestant Association, to the People of Great Britain.' A day or two since, a kind of answer to this was put into my hand, which pronounces its style contemptible, its reasoning futile, and its objects malicious. On the contrary, I think the style of it is clear, easy and natural; the reasoning, in general, strong and conclusive; the object or design, kind and benevolent. And in pursuance of the same kind and benevolent design, namely, to preserve our happy constitution, I shall endeavour to confirm the substance of this tract, by a few plain arguments." [79]

For Wesley, the crux of the debate was that the oath[80] in Savile's Act would not give the required assurance because of an old Catholic maxim that "no faith is to be kept with heretics".[81] His information was derived from the Council of Constance in 1414, when John Hus was executed as a heretic in spite of a pledge of safe conduct. Wesley also affirmed that the Roman Catholic recognition of the spiritual and dispensing power of the Pope, and of the Priesthood's right to absolve

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78 A full discussion of the Anti-Maynooth campaign will follow in a later chapter.

79 A Letter to the Printer of the 'Public Advertiser' occasioned by the Late Act passed in Favour of Popery. City Road, 21 Jan. 1780. In Works, X. pp.159-161.

80 18 Geo III cap. 60.

"and I do swear, that I do reject and detest, as an unchristian and impious position, that it is lawful to murder or destroy any person or persons whatsoever, for or under pretence of their being heretics; and also that unchristian and impious principle that no faith is to be kept with heretics."

81 Works, X. p.160.

sins, preluded them from giving absolute "allegiance of any Government."[82] If it had simply been the oath with which Wesley took issue, then his objections would have been understandable. However, he was also opposed to the actual measures of toleration themselves. There is a real contradiction between the two paragraphs in his letter:

> "Let there be as 'boundless a freedom in religion' as any man can conceive." 83

> "'But the late Act', you say, 'does not either tolerate or encourage Roman Catholics' I appeal to matter of fact. Do not the Romanists themselves understand it as a toleration? You know they do. And does it not already (let alone what it may do by and by) encourage them to preach openly, to build chapels (at Bath and elsewhere) to raise seminaries, and to make numerous converts day by day to their intolerant, persecuting principles?" 84

Wesley is prepared to concede "freedom in religion" to anyone who knows what "freedom" means. He does not accept that the Roman Church, with its "intolerant, persecuting principles", deserves freedom because it was not prepared to grant it. Some of Wesley's fears on this subject stemmed from Ireland, where he recorded in 1752 that he had "learned the particulars of the late riot. Some weeks ago a large mob assembled one evening, broke many of the windows, and had just broke into the house, when a guard of soldiers came. The chief rioters were apprehended and tried; but ten or eleven of the jurymen being Papists, frightened the twelfth, so that he did not contradict when they brought in their fellows, not guilty."[85] Wesley distrusted Roman Catholic justice in Ireland, and he had no desire to see it implemented in England. Freedom could only be given to those who could be trusted to use it aright.

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82 Ibid., p.160.

83 Ibid., p.159.

84 Ibid., p.161.

85 Journal, 20 July 1752.

One of the most significant sentences in Wesley's letter to the Public Advertiser was, "and they are increasing daily."[86] The really bitter pill was the apparent success of the Roman Church on the great missionary battlefield. Wesley might well have emerged unscathed from his brief foray into politics through this letter. However, three things combined to transform his rather small beginning into a very significant event. The first was the absolute delight with which the Protestant Association heralded their recently acquired and well-known supporter.[87] The second was the disturbing outbreak of serious rioting in London on Friday, 2 June 1780 at the instigation of Lord George Gordon and the Protestant Association. The third was a lengthy public controversy between Wesley and an Irish Capuchin named Father O'Leary.

It is important at the outset to state that there is no evidence of any active participation in the Gordon riots by either John or Charles Wesley. Nineteenth century Catholic writers tried to establish a closer connection than the facts can sustain.[88] Wesley defined his attitude in a sermon on Sunday 5th November 1780:

> "I preached at the new chapel, on Luke ix 55, 'Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of'; and showed, that supposing the Papists to be heretics, schismatics, wicked men, enemies to us and to our church and nation; yet we ought not to persecute, to kill, hurt or grieve them, but barely to prevent their doing hurt." [89]

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86 Works, X.p.161.

87 Cf. Protestant Magazine I. p.28. This reference quoted in M. Edwards op.cit. , p.105.

88 Cf. Rev. Alexius Mills, The History of Riots in London in the year 1780, Commonly called the Gordon Riots (London 1883).
W.J. Amherst, op.cit., pp.146-148.
Daniel O'Connell in a controversy with the Wesleyans in the 1830s concerning National Education.

89 Journal, 5 Nov. 1780.

After the violence of the Gordon Riots, Wesley was anxious to play down his connection with the Protestant Association. In a response to O'Leary's accusation of writing 'Letters in Defence of the Protestant Associations in England',[90] Wesley replied:

> "Hold! In my first letter I have only three lines in defence of a tract published in London. But I have not one line "in Defence of the Associations," either in London or elsewhere." [91]

Just before writing this declaration, Wesley had gone to see Lord George Gordon in the Tower; he recorded that the conversation "turned upon Popery and Religion",[92] and hoped that Gordon's confinement would be a blessing to him.

The controversy with Father O'Leary, occasioned by Wesley's opposition to the Relief Act of 1780 was significant on several accounts. First, the controversy, which was partly theological and partly political, stemmed from a political issue, thereby revealing the close relationship between religious and political facts in Methodist anti-Catholicism. Secondly, the debate was carried out between a Methodist and an Irish Priest in a Dublin journal,[93] thus demonstrating the significance of Ireland at an early stage in the relations between Catholics and Methodists. This controversy was the first of many between the Methodists and the Irish Roman Catholic clergy. When the Catholics of Ireland acquired a more corporate and direct political philosophy, under the leadership of Daniel O'Connell, one can see the politico-religious debate par excellence. Thirdly, O'Leary had a very sharp mind and he exposed some of Wesley's 'inconsistencies' with great wit and perception.

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90 Works, X. p.162.

91 Ibid., p.162.

92 Journal 19 Dec. 1780.

93 The Freeman's Journal.

The Capuchin priest quickly latched on to Wesley's apparent dualism with regard to religious toleration:

> "In his [Wesley's] first letter, he disclaims persecution on the score of religion, and, in the same breath, strikes out a creed of his own for the Roman Catholics, and say, "that they should not be tolerated even amongst the Turks." Thus, the satyr in the fable breathes hot and cold in the same blast, and a lamb of peace is turned inquisitor." [94]

O'Leary had a real grasp of the arguments of eighteenth century protestant controversialists. He wrote that he was "no stranger to the ground on which they will attack me: either the rusty weapons of old councils, or a catalogue of old massacres, will be drawn out of their smouldering arsenals: arms as ill suited to the eighteenth century as Saul's helmet was to David's head. I will be attacked with the council of Lataran, the wars of the Albigenses, the massacre of St Bartholomew, etc."[95]

Wesley based much of his case against civil concessions to Roman Catholics on the proceedings of the Council of Constance. O'Leary denied his interpretation of that Council, and, even if it were true surely "It is in vain to ransack old councils, imperial constitutions and ecclestiastical canons, whether genuine or spurious, against heretics, in order to brand the present generation of Catholics."[96] O'Leary was at pains to prove that eighteenth century Roman Catholics could be absolutely loyal to the English crown regardless of medieval disputes and behaviour. He cited his own life as proof. In the course of the war between England and France, which began in 1756, prisoners

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94 Rev. Arthur O'Leary, Miscellaneous Tracts: in which are introduced, The Rev John Wesley's Letter, and the Defence of the Protestant Association (2nd Ed. Dublin, 1781). p.215.

95 Ibid., p.273.

96 Ibid., p.277.

of war made by the French were confined at St Malo. Many of them were Irishmen and Catholics, and O'Leary was appointed chaplain to the prisons and hospitals. The Duc de Choiseul, minister of foreign affairs, asked O'Leary to persuade the Catholic soldiers to transfer their allegiance to France. He refused to do so arguing that it would be "a crime to engage the King of England's soldiers into the service of a catholic monarch against their protestant sovereign."[97]

The lengthy dispute about what Wesley actually wrote in the years 1779-80 was a strain on relations between Methodists and Catholics. In 1780 O'Leary issued Remarks on the Rev John Wesley's letter on the civil Principles of Roman Catholics and his defence of the Protestant Association.[98] According to this title, Wesley was the author not only of the Letter but the defence also. Wesley records that when O'Leary's six letters were put into one and printed in London, the title was, Mr O'Leary's remarks on the Rev Mr W's Letter in Defence of the Protestant Associations in England; to which are prefixed Mr Wesley's Letters.[99] Once again it is alleged that Wesley wrote the Defence of the Protestant Association. The difficulty is that Wesley denied writing this letter. He states, "the second of those Letters is not mine. I never saw it before."[100] This is no mere pedantic point. It is one thing to claim, as Wesley did, that he had only written "three lines in defence of a Tract published in London," but it is quite another thing to claim, as O'Leary did, that Wesley was virtually the spokesman for the Protestant Association and therefore directly implicated in the Gordon Riots:

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97 D.N.B.

98 Ibid., This was first issued in Dublin.

99 Works, X. p.162.

100 Ibid., p.162.

> "But if judgment has been ever betrayed, or humanity insulted, they are now betrayed and insulted by those persons who compose what they call the Protestant Association, of whom Mr Wesley is become the apologist." [101]

It is a remarkable fact that nineteenth century Catholic writers have followed O'Leary's account while the Methodists have adhered to Wesley's. Rev Thomas R England, O'Leary's biographer wrote that

> " 'The Protestant Association', whose object was, by acts of violence, to terrify the legislature from extending any relief to the catholics of England, was a measure of popular and fanatical institution. However imposing it was in point of physical strength, it stood much in need of literary defence against able and powerful antagonists; and Wesley conciliated the favor and ensured the applause of the multitude by 'A letter concerning the principles of Roman Catholics', and 'A defence of the protestant association', which he printed in January 1780." [102]

England went on to accuse Wesley of attempting to exterminate popery "by physical force." [103]

Seventeen years later, similar allegations were made by Daniel O'Connell in two letters 'To the Ministers and Office-Bearers of the Wesleyan Methodist Societies of Manchester'.[104] O'Connell suggested that Wesley was the instigator of the Protestant Association and he "exhibited the most ardent, but melancholy zeal in the cause of intolerance."[105] O'Connell's attacks caused the Rev George Cubitt, a Wesleyan minister, to scurry off to the British Museum to prepare a defence. The Methodists obviously took the attack seriously, and

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101 O'Leary, op.cit., p.260.

102 Rev. T.R. England, The Life of the Reverend Arthur O'Leary (London 1822), p.83.

103 Ibid., p.84.

104 O'Connell wrote two letters to the Wesleyans at Manchester because of their opposition to National Education:

First Letter	–	London 6 July 1839, 12 pp.
Second Letter	–	London 1 Aug. 1839, 18 pp.

105 O'Connell, first letter p.4.

Cubitt was constantly in touch with Jabez Bunting as his research progressed. Cubitt asked Bowers to "be so good as to see Dr Bunting and tell him I regret the delay of another day - but I cannot help it."[106] The Wesleyan minister finally published his findings in a pamphlet entitled Strictures on Mr O'Connell's Letters to the Wesleyan Methodists.[107] Cubitt was convinced that O'Connell had gone too far and that Wesley did not in fact write the Defence of the Protestant Association. A book by the Rev. Alexium J.F. Mills[108] about the Gordon Riots revealed that the debate was still not closed. Mills quoted from the Protestant Association's "Appeal to the People of England" in 1779 and then wrote that,

> "From this extract a just idea may be found of the character of that infamous appeal, in which, after twelve months of busy plotting in secret, the Protestant Association, through the pen of John Wesley, proclaimed itself to the world, and more than hinted at its future work." 109

It is a theme running through Mills' book, that it was really John Wesley, who instigated and motivated the Protestant Association:

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106 MCA. MSS. 1. G. Cubitt to J. Bunting 29 July 1839.
2. G. Cubitt to J. Bunting 30 July 1839.
3. G. Cubitt to J. Bowers 10 Aug. 1839.
4. G. Cubitt to J. Bowers 12 Aug. 1839.
5. G. Cubitt to J. Bunting 1 Jan. 1840.

Letters 1, 2 and 5 are printed in W.R. Ward, Early Victorian Methodism. The Correspondence of Jabez Bunting 1830-1858 (1976). pp.229-231, and p.237.

107 Cubitt states that the Defence of the Protestant Association "bears no resemblance whatever to Mr Wesley's style of thought and expression" Strictures, p.57.

108 Rev. Alexius J.F. Mills, op.cit.

109 Ibid., p.25.

> "The pulpit, no less than the platform had resounded with every kind of menace, and, at the moment of which we are speaking, the one hundred thousand members of the Association represented a power ready disciplined for evil, and taught, by the founder of Methodism, to consider the chastisement of the Papists a work decreed by Heaven." 110

In fact Mills was disgusted that Wesley had not been tried along with Gordon, for his evil participation in the whole affair.[111]

Throughout the century Methodist writers tried to refute these allegations against their founder.[112] The evidence suggests that Wesley was telling the truth when he stated, "But I have not one line "in Defence of the Associations", either in London or elsewhere."[113] In his Journal, Wesley recorded his writing of the letter to the Printer of the Public Advertiser:

> "Receiving more and more accounts of the increase of Popery, I believed it my duty to write a letter concerning it, which was afterwards inserted in the public papers. Many were grievously offended; but I cannot help it; I must follow my own conscience."[114]

The Journal does not record any other writings of this nature and certainly none revealing him to be the spokesman of the Protestant Association. This in itself is not conclusive, but when the second edition of O'Leary's Miscellaneous Tracts appeared in 1781, the title page read The Rev John Wesley's Letter concerning The Civil Principles of Roman Catholics, also, A Defence of the Protestant Association.[115]

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110 Ibid., p.54.

111 Ibid., p.123.

112 Cf. Luke Tyerman, The Life and Times of the Rev. John Wesley, M.A. (London 1878), III, pp.318-323.

113 Works, X. p.162.

114 Journal, 2 Jan. 1780.

115 O'Leary, op.cit., p.189.

Although this is still ambiguous, Wesley's authorship of the Defence is no longer directly claimed. O'Leary's apparent retraction along with Wesley's denial is convincing, especially since there are certain question marks concerning O'Leary's behaviour on occasions.[116] In addition Cubitt seemed genuinely convinced, even in personal letters, that his meticulous researches had exonerated Wesley's name.[117] Nevertheless, Wesley's behaviour during the year of 1780 opened up the possibility of misrepresentation. In January, he publicly supported the reasoning behind the "Appeal of the Protestant Association", in a letter to a newspaper.[118] In February, the Protestant Association voted a Resolution of thanks to Wesley for his support.[119] In March, he sent two letters to the Editors of the Freeman's Journal in Dublin, refuting O'Leary's 'Remarks'.[120] In December he visited Lord George in the Tower.[121] Amherst sums up the impression he left on Catholic writers:

> "We need not wonder, then, that the Wesleyan Methodists have always been amongst the most bitter enemies of the Church. Their founder was not only an enthusiast, but a firebrand. One of his first principles was, No toleration to Catholics; he inculcated it in his followers, and he urged it by actual persecution." [122]

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116 Cf. D.N.B. Froude described him as "a paid and secret instrument of treachery" on one occasion.

117 "If, making allowances for deficiencies, my brethren think I have cleared Mr Wesley's character, and by exposing the nature of papistical attacks done a little in support of Wesleyanism and Protestantism, I shall be very thankful." - Cubitt to Bunting, 1 July 1840.

118 Works, X. pp.159-161.

119 Cubitt, Strictures.

120 Works, X. pp.162-173.

121 Journal, 19 Dec. 1780.

122 Amherst, op.cit., p.147.

Statements like that reveal the remarkable gulf between nineteenth and twentieth century interpretation. These factors, the reaction to reaction, definition through controversy, the stimulus of Catholic Ireland, politics sharpening the debate, and the nineteenth century writings about Wesley, directed and confirmed Methodist anti-Catholicism. All but the first continued to exist in the nineteenth century, so it is hardly surprising that the conflict was heightened.

It might seem strange to begin a thesis on early nineteenth century Methodist anti-Catholicism with Wesley's own attitude, since he died in 1791, but it can be justified on two counts. The same factors influenced the followers as did the founder and the nineteenth century Wesleyans, had a tremendous veneration for their founder.[123] In George Eliot's Adam Bede, the hero made a trip to the small village of Snowfield to find Dinah Oxley, the Methodist preacher. When he was shown into her room, he noticed a "portrait of Wesley on the wall, and the few books lying on the large Bible."[124] The Methodists, after Wesley's death believed themselves to be following in the orthodox footsteps of their founder in the crusade against Roman Catholicism. A writer in the Methodist Magazine of 1812 demonstrates this attitude:

> "Mr Wesley thought, that the liberty granted the Catholics to the extent which they now enjoy, was of dangerous tendency; and does it not appear that the danger approaches us with hasty strides." [125]

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123 The M.C.A. retain many examples of an early Wesley veneration among his followers. Locks of his hair, portions of his curtains and some of his everyday tools were kept and preserved. Many pottery busts and pictures of him were distributed at an early stage.

124 Eliot, Adam Bede, XXXVIII.

125 Methodist Magazine, 1812, p.613.

Significantly the stimulus for this comment appears to have come from Ireland:

> "We see what sort of treatment we are to expect from Roman Catholics, wherever they have us in their power, by the late conduct of the Irish Rebels." 126

There were ecumenical elements in Wesley's theology, although his sermon on Catholic Spirit is a powerful antidote against taking it too far:

> "That a Catholic Spirit is not Speculative Latitudinarianism. It is not an indifference to all opinions: This is the spawn of hell, not the offspring of heaven. This unsettledness of thought, this being, 'driven to and fro, and tossed about with every wind of doctrine', is a great curse, not a blessing; an irreconcilable enemy, not a friend, to true Catholicism. A man of a truly catholic spirit, has not now his religion to seek. He is fixed as the sun, in his judgment concerning the main branches of Christian Doctrine... Observe this, you who know not what spirit ye are of; who call yourselves men of a catholic spirit, only because you are of a muddy understanding; because your mind is all in a mist; because you have no settled, consistent principles, but are for jumbling all opinions together." 127

Nevertheless the triple effects of theological controversy, political disputes and Ireland forced Wesley to an anti-Catholic position. The most serious result of this was his legacy to the Methodists in the nineteenth century. The Methodist opposition to Roman Catholic Emancipation, the attack on the Established Church in Ireland and in England and the endowment of Maynooth was firmly in the Wesleyan tradition.

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126 Ibid., p.613.

127 Sermons, I. XXXIX. Catholic Spirit.

APPENDIX

Cf. Sermons Vol. II XCVII. On Zeal pp. 462-471.

"It was Zeal that kindled fires in our nation, during the reign of bloody Queen Mary. It was Zeal that soon after made so many provinces of France a field of blood. It was Zeal that murdered so many thousand unresisting Protestants, in the never-to-be-forgotten massacre of Paris. It was Zeal that occasioned the still more horrid massacre in Ireland; the like whereof, both with regard to the number of the murdered, and the shocking circumstances wherewith many of those murders were perpetrated, I verily believe never occurred before, since the world began. As to the other parts of Europe, an eminent German Writer has taken immense pains, to search both the records, in various places and the most authentic histories, in order to gain some competent knowledge of the blood which has been shed since the Reformation. And computes, that partly by private persecution, partly by religious wars in the course of forty years, reckoning from the year 1520, about forty millions of persons have been destroyed! "

II

THE IRISH CONNEXION

> "In these times Popery is evidently concentrating all her forces, for the purpose of regaining her lost dominion through the world; and as Ireland appears to be destined to become the field of this ardent conflict of principle, and as by a providential arrangement, you, our brother ministers, and the Societies under your pastoral charge, whom we delight in acknowledging as our brethren in Christ, are placed in the midst of this state of things."
>
> The Answer of the British Conference to the Annual Address of Irish Conference, 1839.[1]

The importance of Irish Methodism within the British Connexion was clearly established by Wesley's twenty-one visits. The Methodist founder presided over the eight meetings of the Irish Conference between 1752 and 1778, and when annual conferences became the norm in 1782, Wesley and Dr. Coke alternated in the office of President. When Wesley died Irish Methodism had been firmly established and on similar lines to its English counterpart; an itinerant ministry, a circuit and district system and an annual conference held in Whitefriar Street Chapel, Dublin.[2] On Wesley's last visit to Ireland in 1789, the total membership of the Methodist societies was just over fourteen thousand.[3] This may not seem a very impressive figure but it represents a 500% improvement on that of twenty years before, and a 225% improvement on the figures for 1780.[4] A graph of Irish membership statistics would show a rapid rise from 1770-1820, a much flatter curve from 1820-1844

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1 Irish Conference Minutes, 1840.

2 C.H. Crookshank, History of Methodism in Ireland, i. pp.360-361.

3 F. Jeffery, Irish Methodism, Appendix 1. p.97.

4 Ibid., Calculations based on the table.

and a dramatic fall from then until 1855. The first stage represents the period of intensive missionary efforts; the second shows the effect of the political and religious conflict with a more aggressive Irish Catholicism and the third stage indicates the tragic effect of the Irish famine and consequent emigration.

Irish Methodism never achieved the numerical success that it promised at the beginning of the nineteenth century and there were two basic reasons for this apparent failure. The first was the remarkable resilience of the Roman Catholic Church, in spite of the activities of many gospel propagating and tract distributing societies. The second was the crippling effect of emigration. The Irish Wesleyan conference reported in 1837 that 692 members emigrated that year, and they included some of the "most active, influential and useful agents of our Society."[5] As has been pointed out:

> "When it is remembered that this figure refers only to adults that it does not include the Primitive Wesleyans, that it is a feature repeated year by year, it may be realised how much Irish Methodism was denuded of many who otherwise might have given notable leadership." [6]

The British Conference was disappointed by the small numerical increase and also by the apparent inefficiences of Irish organisation. Adam Clarke wrote that "all their work lies in sixes and sevens."[7] The Irish Connexion always seemed to be in financial difficulties and the British Conference had to come to the rescue in the early 1820s.

The true significance of Irish Methodism in the first half of the nineteenth century lay not in its numerical success nor its organisational efficiency, nor even in its impact on Irish society but rather in

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5 F. Jeffery, Methodism and the Irish Problem, p.20.

6 Ibid., p.20.

7 M.C.A. MSS. Adam Clarke to Jabez Bunting, 4 July 1823.

its front line position in the great evangelical crusade against Roman Catholicism. It was this that enthused the English Wesleyans with concern for their Irish brothers and which enabled them to write eloquently that

> "Whilst to you belongs the glory of cultivating a field so interesting and arduous, it is equally obligatory on us, the British Conference, and the Wesleyan Methodists of this nation, and indeed of the world to support you, by sympathy, by prayer, by encouraging counsels, by a close and compact union and by all other means in our power." 8

The life and correspondance of Adam Clarke illustrates this attitude. Clarke, who was born in County Londonderry, was President of the British Conference on three occasions, in 1806, 1814 and 1822. His scholarship and humanitarian concern earned him a well-deserved eminence, both inside and outside Methodism. In 1807 he received the the diploma of M.A. from the university and King's College, Aberdeen and in 1808 he was awarded the degree of LL.D. He was a fellow of the Antiquarian Society, a member of the Royal Irish academy, an associate of the Geological Society of London, a fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society, and a member of the American Historical Institute.[9] His achievements show that his correspondence from Ireland was not that of a poorly educated and bigoted Methodist preacher. In a letter to the Methodist Preachers in Great Britain, Clarke appealed for continued support for the work in Ireland:

> "And to the Methodists alone, under God, is it owing that Popery has been kept in check in that kingdom; and that the way to preach the Gospel has been made plain and kept open. I mention these things to show my Brethren the necessity of continuing to support and preserve a vineyard in which their forefathers laboured and fainted not." 10

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8 The Answer of the British Conference to the Annual Address of the Irish Conference, 1839. Irish Conference Minutes, 1840.

9 D.N.B.

10 M.C.A. Typescript. Adam Clarke to the Methodist Preachers in Great Britain, Millbrook, 21 Oct. 1822.

This letter might undervalue the efforts of the Anglican and Presbyterian evangelicals but it indicates that the Irish Methodists felt their position to be a strategic one. This feeling of being God's appointed agents, was both an onus and a stimulus to Methodist efforts in Ireland. An onus in the sense that Irish Roman Catholicism assumed too much the position of an anti-christian heresy which must be fought on all possible levels. A stimulus in the sense of the encouragement it gave to missionary efforts.

Some of Clarke's correspondence reveals the intense fear of Roman Catholicism among the Irish Methodists. In 1823 Clarke had a frightening journey through Ireland which he related in detail to Jabez Bunting:

> "I had got only a few hours out of Maghera, when it was attacked by the Ribbonmen, all the Protestants driven out of it; ... the Papists were insultingly bold, & if strong measures are not resorted to by government, I have no doubt that a general massacre of the Protestants is at the door." [11]

The term Ribbonmen was often applied indiscriminately to the members of any agrarian secret society. The period in which Clarke was writing saw a remarkable population increase from 5 millions in 1800 to 7.7 million in 1831. The resultant pressure on the land made agrarian crimes a recurring factor in Irish rural life.[12]

A week later Clarke resumed his Irish chronicle by informing Bunting that "The Protestants are leaving the country in shoals that they may not have their throats cut. The Papists will soon have the country to themselves."[13] With this type of information coming in from

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11 M.C.A. MSS. Adam Clarke to Jabez Bunting, 27 June 1823.

12 Cf. J.C. Beckett, The Making of Modern Ireland 1603-1923. pp.291-295.

13 M.C.A. MSS. Adam Clarke to Jabez Bunting, 4 July 1823.

Ireland, it is easy to anticipate the feelings of the English Wesleyans towards Irish Roman Catholicism.

If one accepts that Irish Methodism had its real significance in the relation to Roman Catholicism then the years 1798 to 1800 were particularly crucial. Three important events took place in each of these years, which profoundly affected Methodist attitudes to Roman Catholicism in the first half of the nineteenth century; the Rebellion of the United Irishmen in 1798, the establishment of the Irish Methodist Mission in 1799 and the Act of Union in 1800.

In 1791, the year of Wesley's death, Wolfe Tone helped to found in Belfast the first Society of the United Irishmen.[14] Wesley had always believed that given the chance, the Catholics in Ireland could be persecuting and disloyal. That was the reason for his delight in the volunteer movement. The events of 1798, only seven years after his death, were to give powerful reinforcement to Wesley's opinion in the eyes of his followers. Although the United Irishmen were in origin mostly Northern Presbyterians, committed to a policy of parliamentary reform, the movement changed markedly as it progressed, both in personnel and ideology. From the end of 1794 onwards, the United Irishmen were increasingly committed to a policy of alliance with France and complete separation from England. By 1796, a military organisation had been set up and the aim had ceased to be reform but revolution. The remarkable complexity of personnel and ideas was eventually reflected in the differing events of 1798. The rebellion in the North, where endemic land war had undermined the unity between

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14 Beckett, op.cit., p.263.

Catholic and Presbyterian, was led principally by Henry Joy McCracken, a cotten manufacturer who was born a Presbyterian.[15] In contrast, the rebellion in Wexford had more of the characteristics of a religious feud with several Roman Catholic priests as its leaders:

> "This leadership gave the rising an essentially religious character; and though the rebels had the support of a few protestant radicals, they regarded protestants in general as their enemies, to be attacked, plundered, and even slaughtered, simply for being protestants." [16]

The three violent incidents of the year which most affected the Methodists were the massacre at Scullabogue barn, the imprisonment of Protestants at Wexford and the French landing at Killala in Connaught.

At Scullabogue a number of loyalists had been imprisoned in a small, narrow barn. The great majority of the prisoners were Protestants, although there were some Roman Catholics. Under false orders and driven by fear, the guards took out thirty-five men, shot them, and then set fire to the barn, killing well over a hundred people. Scullabogue took its place in the Methodist historical consciousness alongside the Marian persecutions and the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre, and this selective history was invoked whenever Roman Catholics claimed political rights. In 1812, when Catholic Emancipation was a vital issue, a Methodist preacher from Liverpool said in a letter to the Liverpool Courier:

> "It is no breach of truth or charity to assert, that the most active incendiaries in that kingdom were found amongst the Roman Catholic Clergy. They excited their fanatical adherents to the most obstinate rebellion, and acts of savage cruelty. They countenanced the cruelties in Wexford, and encouraged the murderers; and the memorable massacre at Scullabogue, was by the express command of a priest." [17]

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15 Cf. T. Pakenham, The Year of Liberty, pp.195ff.

16 Beckett, op.cit., p.263.

17 W. West, Observations and Reflections on what is styled Catholic

(see over)..

The imprisonment at Wexford was even more vivid to the Methodists, since there was at least one Methodist martyr,[18] while two others narrowly escaped death when the government forces freed them after the victory at Vinegar Hill. In 1800, George Taylor, a Methodist preacher who had been imprisoned at Gorey and at Wexford published a history of the rebellion to which was added an account of his own "Captivity, and merciful deliverance."[19]

Taylor's experiences were horrifying and he had no doubt about the prime responsibility for the brutality of the rebellion:

> "It has been remarked, that none of the rebels were so blood-thirsty, as those who were most regular attendants at the Popish ordinances...." [20]

The French landing in Co. Mayo under General Humbert, when Britain and France were at war, was another source of Methodist grievance. Wesley had already remarked on the French dimension to the Williamite Wars in 1688. Although French Republicans were not the Catholic Sun King, the continental aspect of the Rebellion of the United Irishmen symbolised, for the Methodists, the disloyal and unchanging nature of Irish Roman Catholicism. Fifteen years later West described the "Papists" as "the same this day, as when they rallied round the French standard in Killala."[21] Fifty years later Henry Fish used the French

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17 Emancipation containing Arguments against the Admission of Roman Catholics to a Participation of Political Power in the British State. To which is added a Series of Letters on the same subject originally addressed to the Editor of the Liverpool Courier (Liverpool, 1812).

18 Crookshank, ii. p.139.

19 G. Taylor, A History of the Rise, Progress, and Suppression of the Rebellion in the County of Wexford in the year 1798 (Dublin, 3rd ed. 1829, 1st ed. 1800).

20 Ibid., p.99.

21 West, op.cit., p.19.

involvement in the rebellion as an argument against increasing the Maynooth grant:

> "And will it be credited that at the period when Drs Troy and O'Reilly, two Romish Bishops, were negotiating with Mr. Pitt for the establishment of the College at Maynooth, and were, during a time of great excitement along with others, publishing addresses to exhort the people to loyalty, and recommending allegiance to England, that the same year that they did these things... they became members of the Roman Catholic Committee which was engaged in a treasonable correspondence with France for the invasion of Ireland with an army, and were preparing for the rebellion of 1798?" [22]

Fish names as his source for this information, the Memoirs of Wolfe Tone, but he must have been mistaken. When Tone was negotiating for French help in 1796 he was aware that the Irish Catholic clergy, in general, would not support the rebellion. He even asked the French Government to contact the Pope and persuade him to wrote "to his Legate, Dr. Troy, in order to secure, at least the neutrality, if not the support of the Irish Catholic clergy."[23] Troy, who became Archbishop of Dublin in 1784, appears to have been a steady friend of the constituted authorities. Like most Irish clergy educated abroad before the French Revolution, he feared the growth of popular principles. In a pastoral in 1798 he described the clerical organisers of the rebellion as "vile prevaricators and apostates from religion, loyalty, honour and decorum."[24] After the rebellion, he supported the Government in its policy of legislative union because he felt that the Irish Parliament would never pass Catholic Emancipation. Fish's

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22 H. Fish, The Workings of Popery.... In which the question is briefly viewed in relation to the Maynooth Grant (1845).

23 W.H.Wolfe Tone ed., The Life of Theobold Wolfe Tone, written by himself and extracted from his journals (London, 1828).

24 D.N.B.

assertions were based on rumour rather than substantiated historical facts, and says more about Methodist attitudes than Catholic disloyalty.

The Rebellion of the United Irishmen had an impact on English Wesleyanism principally because of the information which filtered out of Ireland. Taylor's book went to at least three editions, and was serialised in the Methodist Magazine throughout 1804. One can imagine the effect on the Methodist readers of Taylor's publication of an oath alleged to have been found on some of the slain:

> "I A.B., do solemnly swear, by our Lord Jesus Christ, who suffered for us on the cross, and by the Blessed Virgin Mary, that I will burn, destroy, and murder, all heretics up to my knees in blood - So help me God."[25]

In a similar style a pamphlet called An Extract of a Letter from a Gentleman in Ireland to Mr. William Thompson, (the first President of the Wesleyan Conference after John Wesley's death and an Irishman), was produced for sale "at the Methodist Preaching-Houses in Town and Country." It was also reproduced in the Methodist Magazine in 1799. The slaughter of Protestants in Wexford was described in vivid language and the Gentleman went on to give an even more emotive account of a rebel attack on a church at Gorey. Everything which the Methodists held dear was brutally destroyed. The Ten Commandments which were over the Communion-Table were broken in pieces, Bibles and prayer books were ripped up, and two Protestants were cruelly murdered.

There was also a more personal communication between the two countries. Adam Averell, who subsequently led the Primitive Wesleyan Methodists in Ireland wrote to Joseph Benson,[26] a "pillar of conservative

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25 Methodist Magazine, 1804. p.422.

26 W.R. Ward, Religion and Society in England 1790-1850, p.4.

Wesleyanism":

> " 'Tis thought about nine-tenths of the Protestants of Co. Wexford have been massacred amongst whom were about 14 who were in our connection, but tis remarkable of all these of our Brethren who had died by their hands not one had been faithfull or steady."[27]

The information which reached the English Wesleyans from Ireland dealt primarily with the events in Wexford. They were encouraged to believe that the rebellion in Wexford was typical of the whole country. The fact that the leaders of the United Irishmen were mainly protestants was ignored. So too was the part played by the protestant dissenters in the North. Wolfe Tone had no desire to see Ireland dominated by the Roman Catholic Church. The ideology of the Rights of Man had little time for ecclesiastical systems, Protestant or Catholic. The Methodists in Ireland focused their attention on the areas which were dominated by sectarian fighting. Consequently they would have endorsed the conclusion of a later Methodist historian that the rebellion was roused "to fury by hatred to Saxon rule, thirst for Protestant blood, and desire for Popish domination."[28] This was the impression they conveyed to the English Wesleyans and such were the atrocities in the South-Eastern counties of Ireland that it was not entirely without foundation. It was but a short step to the conclusion that the Roman Catholic hierarchy was implicated in the rebellion and this point was argued by numerous Methodist pamphleteers.

When the Irish Conference met on July 13, 1798 under Coke's presidency, a moving address was drawn up to be sent to the British Conference:

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27 I.W.H.S.A. MSS. Adam Averell to Joseph Benson 7 June 1798.

28 Crookshank, ii. p.135.

> "The scenes of carnage and desolation which open to our view in almost every part of the land are truly affecting; and while we drop the tear of commiseration over our unhappy country, and our deluded countrymen in arms against the best sovereigns, and the happiest constitution in the world, we cannot help crying, O God, shorten the day of our calamity..." [29]

The Address went on to give a graphic description of the "deplorable state" of Ireland. The British Conference was understandably concerned and met the financial needs of the Irish preachers before their own claims were considered.[30]

The Rebellion of the United Irishmen brought up to date the Methodist view of Roman Catholic history, and reinforced it. Roman Catholicism, by its very nature, was persecuting and disloyal, therefore it was not entitled to social or political rights. That attitude was made apparent in the publication of Taylor's book on the Wexford Rebellion. It was dedicated to George Ogle, "that able and uncompromising Advocate of the Protestant Cause in the House of Commons."[31] Ogle was elected to the Irish Parliament as member for Wexford county in 1768 and he sat for that constituency until 1796. After the disturbances of 1798, he re-entered Parliament as member for Dublin and, although he voted against the legislative union, he was returned to the United Parliament of 1801, again for Dublin. He was firmly opposed to any measure of Catholic Emancipation, having denounced Hobart's Catholic Relief Bill of 1793, and was a supporter of the Established Church in Ireland. The dedication of his book to Ogle indicates Taylor's own political views and his motives for publishing the third edition on March 1, 1829. Taylor stated that -

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29 Ibid., p.145.

30 Ibid., p.147.

31 Taylor, op.cit.

> "The extensive sale of the two former Editions of this little Work, has afforded the Author the most satisfactory proof of the public confidence in the fidelity of his statements, and encourages him to issue a third, and much improved Edition, at a period when every thing connected with the History of Ireland must be viewed with more than ordinary interest." 32

Throughout 1798 the Irish Methodists, unlike the Roman Catholics and Presbyterians, showed themselves to be impeccably loyal to the "constituted authorities." Very few Methodists deviated from that position and those who did were immediately expelled from the Society. A large number of members joined the Government forces "and did their duty to their country as men who feared God and honoured the King."[33] As a result, Dr. Coke was able to obtain special permission from the Lord Lieutenant for the meeting of the Irish Conference in 1798 at a time when all assemblies of more than five men were prohibited.[34] Methodist preachers were allowed to continue their travelling ministry because of special passes from the military authorities.[35] In 1798 the Methodists allied themselves with the established authorities, including the Established Church, to oppose a joint threat from the catholics and dissenters. The Rebellion of the United Irishmen confirmed the Methodist opinion that if Ireland was to have peace then it must be converted to protestantism. That objective could be best achieved by the joint efforts of the Wesleyans and those Anglicans who were prepared to preach the Gospel. As in England, the Irish Anglicans were not always willing to embrace their new allies;[36] but

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32 Ibid., Advertisement.

33 Crookshank, ii. p.132.

34 Ibid., p.144.

35 Ibid., p.148.

36 Cf. J.R. Binns, A History of Methodism in Ireland from Wesley's death in 1791, to the Re-Union of Primitives and Wesleyans in 1878. Unpublished M.A. thesis. pp.15ff.

because the Methodists were numerically weak in Ireland they were committed to the religious and political support of the Church of Ireland as the best way of maintaining protestantism.

The events of 1798 sharpened Methodist hatred of Roman Catholicism as a religious system, and one may conclude with a Methodist historian, writing with the benefit of hindsight in the late nineteenth century "that for ages the memories of that calamitous time will tend to keep alive religious differences which might have been less accentuated if the woeful outbreak never occurred."[37] If the distrust of Roman Catholicism was reinforced so too was the desire to take the Gospel to the 'deluded' Catholic peasantry. Dr. Coke had seen the need for a Special mission even before the rebellion in 1798 but the disturbances fostered the right climate to take the plans a stage further:

> "The minds of the people were subdued; the awful scenes of Vinegar Hill, Wexford, New Ross and Scullabogue still haunted them; the remembrance of the terrible retribution was fresh and vivid; and desolated homesteads ravaged by death and destruction kept before them the sad consequences of rebellion and sin, while the religious teachers who had led them on to ruin, had in many instances lost their confidence." [38]

The Conference of 1799 decided to send out two full time Irish speaking missionaries, whose main task was to preach to the Roman Catholic population. They were not to be confined to one circuit but had freedom to travel throughout the country. It was hoped that this missionary activity would cover an area untouched by the itinerants and that the emphasis on Gaelic preaching would have a greater impact on the Roman Catholics. The enthusiasm of the Irish Wesleyans for

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37 R.C. Phillips, Irish Methodism (1897). p.57.

38 Crookshank, ii. p.165.

this new enterprise was conveyed to the British Conference in the Annual Address in 1799. Many of the elements of the early nineteenth century missionary crusade were present in the address. There is the existence of a "deluded" and morally corrupt people to whom the Gospel must be taken as the only means of true enlightenment. There is a strong feeling of Divine favour inasmuch as "His gracious providence" provides the opportunity. There is the appeal of grand, heroic adventure to those who have "entered upon one of the most arduous undertakings that have been attempted since the primitive times."[39] The basic presupposition of missionary work is the strong belief that the prevailing religion is fundamentally wrong. Consequently in Ireland, the Methodist mission to the Roman Catholic population would be a stimulus to anti-catholicism. However, a necessary distinction between hatred of a religious system and concern for its adherents must be made, since this concern is the raison d'etre of mission.

While the Methodists were finalising their arrangements, a third missionary named Gideon Ouseley was added to the two already chosen, Charles Graham and James McQuigg. In Crookshank's words, "their grand aim was the subjugation of Irish Popery to the faith of Christ." All three had lived through the events of the preceding year. Ouseley on occasions had fallen into rebel hands, so that they were not disposed to view Roman Catholicism with favour. To the Methodists in England who saw the solution of Ireland's problems in religious terms, the Irish mission was worthy of total support. Helped by English backing, the mission to Ireland grew in strength. In 1809 there were twelve missionaries operating in six areas[40] and by 1816

39 An Address from the Irish to the British Conference (Dublin, 13 July 1799). Irish Conference Minutes.

40 Irish Conference Minutes, 1809.

there were twenty-one missionaries working on fourteen stations dotted throughout Ireland.[41] Twelve of these men were competent to preach in Irish.[42] The responsibility for the financial support and administrative organisation of the Irish mission was taken over by the Wesleyan Missionary Committee in London thereby giving the English Methodists a real stake in Irish affairs. It also enabled them to find out more about the state of Roman Catholicism in Ireland from eye-witness accounts. There was a remarkable volume of correspondence between the Irish missionaries, who had to report quarterly, and the Missionary Committee in London.[43] This correspondence had particular significance when political issues such as Catholic Emancipation were being debated in Parliament.

The initial reports from the Irish missionaries were quite optimistic. Graham wrote:

> "You will rejoice to hear that the Catholicks never apeared to have such a desire to hear the Word as they have expressed since we returned from the Conference... It was great comfort to the converted Catholicks whom the lord has given to our labours these three years past to see us return to the Circuits where they live and it has added to their comfort to hear you had provided Bibles for them." [44]

It appears from this letter and others that the distribution of literature, particularly Bibles, was a basic element in the Methodist missionary strategy. As one might expect the correspondence is riddled with accounts of persecution, mostly at the instigation of the Roman Catholic Priests:

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41 See Map in Binns, op.cit.

42 F. Jeffery, Irish Methodism, p.21.

43 Much of this correspondance still survives in the Methodist Mission House in London.

44 M.M.H. MSS. Charles Graham to Dr. Coke, 11 Sept. 1802.

"Wounded and wery no one can describe to you what we pass thro unless they were ear and eye wittnesses [sic] ..." [45]

"Gross immoralities, religious prejudice + political animosities, are among the things which demand the exertions and baffle the designs of the Irish Missionary. But more than all the rest, is the controul they are under to their crafty, intolerant Clergy." [46]

After the mission had been in operation for seven years, Dr. Coke prepared a lengthy report for the Methodist Missionary Society.[47] He stated that Ireland was the most important mission-field in which the Methodists were engaged because "Three millions of the People of this Land are plunged in the deepest ignorance and superstition." He told the English Wesleyans of courageous missionaries who had to be protected by the "Magistracy and Military", the anti-Gospel activities of the "Romish Priests," and finally he expressed the hope that "if the zeal of the Missionaries, the support of the two Conferences, and the generous assistance of the Subscribers, continue, truth will prevail."

This was the kind of information from Ireland which achieved general circulation among the English Wesleyans, especially those with an interest in missionary work. One particularly important aspect of this traffic was the correspondence between Joseph Butterworth and the Irish missionaries. Butterworth was one of the two Methodist M.P.s[48] in the early nineteenth century. He represented Coventry from 1812 to 1818 and then sat for Dover from 1820 until his death in 1826. In common with many other evangelical philanthropists, he had a

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45 M.M.H. MSS. Charles Graham to Dr. Coke, 23 Nov. 1802.

46 M.M.H. MSS. William Reilly to Joseph Taylor, 15 Dec. 1818.

47 M.M.H. MSS. Dr. Coke's draft on Irish Missions for the report of 1806.

48 The other was Thomas Thompson.

profound interest in Ireland and in missionary work, "a cause with him of the highest and most sacred character."[49] Richard Watson believed that he was connected with almost all the missionary societies and he served for many years as the Treasurer of the Wesleyan Missionary Society. As a politician he was steadfastly opposed to Catholic Emancipation and took materials for his political speeches from the Irish missionaries.[50] Gideon Ouseley was writing to Butterworth as early as May 1804.[51] Stories of persecuting priests,[52] and of notable inroads against the forces of Popery[53] reached him regularly. When Catholic Emancipation became a serious issue in 1812, the correspondence from Ireland took on a decidedly political aspect. Butterworth was a founder member of the Methodist Committee of Privileges in 1803, so he was in an excellent position to make use of his information. W.R. Ward has described Butterworth and Allan, another influential lay member of the Committee, as "Protestant constitutionists of a surprisingly Eldonian kind."[54]

The Methodist mission to the Irish Roman Catholic population developed from a small beginning into quite a sophisticated organisation

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49 Richard Watson, A Sermon on the Death of Joseph Butterworth, Esq. (London, 1826).

50 Butterworth referred to a circular letter he had sent out to the Irish missionaries in a debate concerning Catholic claims on 10 May 1825. Hansard, N.S. xiii. 482-483.

51 M.C.A. MSS. Gideon Ouseley to Joseph Butterworth, 29 May 1804.

52 M.C.A. MSS. Gideon Ouseley to Joseph Butterworth, 14 May 1813.

53 M.C.A. MSS. Charles Graham to Joseph Butterworth, 13 Mar. 1805.

54 Ward, op.cit., p.118.

during the first quarter of the nineteenth century. It augmented the normal Methodist itinerant ministry and brought Irish Wesleyanism into sharper conflict with Roman Catholicism. The steady stream of correspondence from the Irish regions into the Missionary Committee in London powerfully affected the English Wesleyan response to Irish Catholicism and its political demands.

While the Methodists were developing their mission, other evangelicals were taking similar steps to reach Ireland with the Gospel. The British and Foreign Bible Society was formed in 1804 and the Methodists, including Butterworth, were enthusiastic supporters. The Society's publications were used by the Methodists in Ireland. In 1806 Graham wrote:

> "It would please you much to see with what joy the Papists receive the books which you have sent us. May the Great Head of the Church pour his Choicest blessings on the Bible Society. The Circulation of their Books has exasperated the Priests to a great degree." 55

Evangelical societies dealing specifically with the needs of Ireland proliferated in the early nineteenth century.[56] The London Hibernian Society was formed in 1806, the Sunday School Society in 1809, the Religious Tract and Book Society in 1817, the Irish Society in 1818, and the Irish branches of the Church Missionary and Jewish Societies were established in 1814 and 1815 respectively.[57] By 1824 these societies were collecting over £18,000 in Ireland.[58] Although a number of them were inter-denominational the main impetus came from the Anglican Evangelicals, in England and in Ireland.

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55 M.M.H. MSS. Graham, Hamilton and Peacock to Coke, 24 Mar. 1806.

56 They are listed in F.K. Brown, Fathers of the Victorians, pp.329-340.

57 See Capt. A.R. Acheson, The Evangelicals in the Church of Ireland 1784-1859. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis pp.70ff and pp.94ff. Also F.K. Brown, op.cit., pp.280-282.

58 Table in Acheson, op.cit., p.101.

The revival of evangelicalism within the Church of Ireland was encouraged by the English evangelicals. The formation of the Irish branch of the Church Missionary Society is a good example. Although there were independent efforts going on within the Irish Church, to found such a society, its eventual achievement in 1814 owed much to the evangelical missionaries, Pratt, Wilson and Jowett.[59] Wilson wrote on June 15 that "Without us no society would have been formed; whereas now in a few years Ireland will be covered with societies."[60] The meeting to establish the Society in Ireland was attended by five hundred people, and later Josiah Pratt preached to twelve hundred.[61] The formation of the C.M.S. not only encouraged the evangelicals within the Irish Church but led to much closer contact with their English counterparts. Edward Bickersteth joined Pratt as co-secretary of the C.M.S. in 1815 and he made a number of visits to Ireland. Dikes, Marsh, Way and Simeon all crossed the Irish sea at one stage or another.[62] The traffic was not all in one direction and a number of the Irish clergy visited England, often on society business. Some even settled in England permanently: Dr. Thorpe in London, H.F. Lyte in Devon and Hugh McNeile in Liverpool.[63]

There was a remarkable growth of evangelical activity in Ireland in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. The growth of the evangelical wings within the Church of England and Ireland, Methodist missionary concern, the formation of evangelical societies, and the

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59 Ibid., p.109.

60 Brown, op.cit., p.281.

61 Ibid.

62 Acheson, op.cit., p.109.

63 Ibid., p.108.

establishment of Sunday and daily schools, were aspects of the renewed desire to take the Gospel to Ireland. Roman Catholicism, weakened if anything by the United Irish Rebellion, and denied political power, was in no position to combat these new developments. The Evangelicals hatched their enterprises in Ireland at a period when the political situation was favourable; by the time the political climate had changed in the late 1820s they were in no mood to concede. There were many evangelicals who genuinely believed that given the necessary time, enthusiasm and money, Ireland could be turned over to protestantism. However, all was not well within the evangelical camp. Expansion went hand in hand with division and fragmentation. The Wesleyans were unhappy with the Calvinist theology of most of the Anglican Evangelicals. Matthew Lanktree, a Methodist preacher wrote:

> "Again we were perplexed by the blighting influence of predestinarian doctrines and a haughty bigoted zeal for 'the Church' in the most exclusive sense;" 64

Until the early years of the nineteenth century the Irish Wesleyan Conference had no desire to separate from the established church. However, there were numerous complaints from Methodists, who, for one reason or another, were finding it difficult to receive the sacraments. The same pressure which resulted in the Plan of Pacification in England was beginning to appear in Ireland. Roughly the same solution was found when the Conference of 1816 granted permission to certain northern circuits to administer the sacraments. From that time onwards there were two separate streams in Irish Methodism. The Wesleyans followed the example of their English counterparts and took on more of the characteristics of a separate church. The Primitive

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64 Quoted by Acheson, p.137.

Wesleyan Methodist Connexion opted to remain within the Church of Ireland; they have been accurately described as "being in but not of the Established Church."[65]

The Church of Ireland suffered another secession in the form of Plymouth Brethrenism, which was born in Dublin around 1825 and grew mainly by secessions from the established church. Although these seceding movements had individual strengths and enthusiasm, the evangelical impact on Ireland, in the long term, was probably weakened. In a sense these divisions were products of a favourable situation, before Roman Catholicism became religiously and politically more aggressive. 20 years after the Methodist split, a Primitive Wesleyan said, "They saw that, in a popish country, the established church was the principal permanent support which the doctrines of the reformation had in the island."[66] This was written at a time when it had become more obvious that if protestantism was to be maintained in Ireland then the established church would have to be the cornerstone.

In 1798 the United Irish Rebellion renewed Methodist fears of Roman Catholicism; in 1799 the establishment of the Wesleyan mission in Ireland increased the Methodist commitment to that country; in 1800 the Act of Union was passed. The idea of Parliamentary Union was not a new idea in Irish history, but can be traced back to Cromwellian times. The events of 1798 gave a fresh impetus to this policy, because the British Government could not afford a disrupted and potentially

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65 Ibid., p.141.

66 F. Jeffery, op.cit., p.36.

rebellious nation so near at hand in time of war. Westminster accepted the idea quite readily but there was strong opposition in Ireland. In 1799 a proposal for union was defeated in the Irish Parliament, but a year later, after Lord Castlereagh had used every device possible including bribery, the Irish Parliament accepted the union. There were two results which were to affect future Methodist political involvement. The Act of Union had eight clauses and the fifth stated:

> "That the Churches of England and Ireland, as now by law established, be united into one Protestant Episcopal Church, to be called the United Church of England and Ireland; ... and that the continuance and preservation of the said United Church as the established church of England and Ireland shall be deemed and taken to be an essential and fundamental part of the union;" 67

Throughout the early nineteenth century the Methodists were especially committed to support the Irish branch of this united church. Even after the Conference decision in 1816 concerning the sacraments, the Irish Wesleyans were keen to maintain harmonious relations with the established church. The reasons for this support are well summed up in a Watchman article in 1836.

> "It is obvious that the important bearing of Methodism on the interests of Protestantism in Ireland is now much more clearly perceived than formerly... and we venture to indulge the hope that the pious and zealous Ministers and members of the Church of Ireland will henceforth be seen affectionately co-operating with their Methodist brethren... in one grand persevering effort to resist and dissipate the papal delusion..." 68

By the 1830s, when there was a strong attack on the Irish wing of the Established Church, it was clear that Methodist support for it would have political consequences, both inside and outside Wesleyanism.

The other result of the legislative union was that the Westminster

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67 Statutes at Large xlii, 648f. 40 George III, c.67.

68 Watchman, 13 July 1836.

Parliament was directly responsible for a considerable Irish Roman Catholic population whose appetites had been whetted by important relaxations in the Penal Law. The Roman Catholic hierarchy had supported the union in the expectation that Pitt's government would grant a measure of Catholic Emancipation. The failure to achieve this, not only weakened the union from the outset, but ensured that Irish political activity at Westminster would centre on this demand until it was conceded. In fact, "Between 1801 and 1829 the only issue that gave any measure of unity or continuity to Irish political life was that of Catholic Emancipation."[69] It was that campaign along with the discussions on Irish National Education that first led the Methodists to oppose Roman Catholicism in a political fashion. As Catholic claims increased throughout the 1830s and 1840s so too did the Methodist response. The Act of Union brought Ireland and its demands to the forefront of British politics; and the Wesleyans had a vested interest in Ireland.

The years 1798-1800 had a profound effect on Methodist attitudes to Ireland and to Roman Catholicism. There could be no political accommodation to a religion which had'produced' the horrors of 1798, so the only hope for Ireland lay in the proclamation of the true Gospel and the development of a truly religious education. Roman Catholicism was too badly organised, politically and religiously, to meet the evangelical thrust into Ireland in the first two decades of the century. As a result, the conflict was delayed but there was always the possibility that by exerting its numerical strength, Irish

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69 Beckett, op.cit., p.295.

Catholicism would demand its rights.

In order to understand the strategic importance of Irish Methodism in the approaching conflict it is necessary to demonstrate the structural relationship between English and Irish Wesleyanism. Although there was not a precise statement of the legal relationship between the two Conferences, the most important link seems to have been that the English Conference, after the death of Wesley, appointed the President of its Irish counterpart. From 1794 to 1809 Dr. Coke presided over every Irish Conference, and Adam Averell generally represented the Irish at the English Conference.[70] However, relationships were more tenuous than either country desired. In 1811 the British Conference resolved that in future the President in Ireland must be one of the Legal Hundred and that the same minister should not be chosen two years in succession.[71] In 1812 the Irish Conference rejected the suggestion that the same man could not officiate in successive years and asked for the Irish representation in the Hundred to be increased to ten.[72] The latter request was granted but the former was not. After the split in Irish Methodism in 1816 the unity of English and Irish Wesleyans was given more concrete form because the President of the British Conference automatically presided over the Irish one. The Irish Conference was enthusiastic about the new arrangement:

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70 J.R. Binns, op.cit., p.51. Appendix 3 in Jeffery, op.cit., is not accurate on the early conferences. Dr. Coke did not preside in 1810 nor 1811. It was Adam Averell and Adam Clarke respectively.

71 Crookshank, op.cit., p.352.

72 Ibid., p.361.

> "We believe it has many decided advantages, and not the least that by bringing to this country from year to year the official head for the time being of the great Methodist Church of England, it thereby gives an importance to the Irish Conference which it would hardly otherwise possess, while it also in a very tangible manner testifies to the essntial unity of the two Conferences." 73

The only occasion during the period 1817-1846 when this sequence was interrupted occurred in 1845 when Jabez Bunting was unable to attend the Irish Conference because of illness, and was replaced by the Rev. John Scott.[74] The English President was generally accompanied by a deputation which included one of the Resident Secretaries for Methodist missions and the Agent of the Missionary Committee for the Irish schools. In 1827, there was a significant addition to this traffic. Thomas Martin and Robert Newstead were appointed to visit the South of Ireland as representatives of the General Missionary Committee in London. The Irish Conference requested that a similar deputation should be appointed for the following year and it subsequently became an annual event. By the 1830s it was normal for about eight or nine English Wesleyans to visit Ireland every year, and the traffic was not all in the same direction. Irish representatives, generally Circuit Chairmen, were delegated to attend the English Conference which began a few days after the end of its Irish counterpart.

The structural links between the two Methodist bodies and the temporal proximity of the Conferences ensured a continual flow of personnel and ideas from one country to another. Almost all of the influential English Wesleyans in the period 1817-1846 had first hand experience of Ireland and its politics. Bunting, for example, paid

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73 Press cuttings from the Irish Christian Advocate (1883-1971) collected by the Irish Wesleyan Historical Society.

74 Appendix.

four visits to the Irish Conference in the decade after 1827.[75] Young's biography of Robert Newton, another four times Wesleyan President, reveals an even greater commitment to Ireland:

> "Scarcely ever, if ever, has an English Wesleyan minister had the influence in Ireland that Robert Newton had. I suppose he had no rival in the matter of his attendances at the Irish Conference. At twenty-three Conferences he was present." [76]

The impressively bulky correspondence between the two countries which has survived is an indication in itself that the links were well maintained, especially at times of political significance. The Methodists, from early days, believed that Ireland had a special claim on their resources because of the religious situation in that "unfortunate country." As a result, "no English evangelical body was more closely involved than the Methodists."[77] This involvement, right from Wesley to Bunting, caused them to hold a particularly unfavourable opinion of Roman Catholicism and its political demands. The relevant information about Ireland and its problems was obtained by the English Wesleyans through their Irish brothers. This information was duly interpreted and disseminated. In return the Methodists in England gave missionary encouragement, religious literature, prayerful support, financial help, and administrative advice. As the nineteenth century progressed, the English Conference took upon itself more and more responsibility for administering the missionary, literary, educational and financial affairs of the Irish Connexion. This missionfield was too important to be left in native hands.

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75 He came as Secretary of the English Conference in 1827, as President in 1829, as a Resident Missions Secretary in 1833, and as President again in 1837. On several other occasions he was deputed to attend but was unable to for various reasons.

76 D.T. Young, Robert Newton, The Eloquent Divine, p.65.

77 Ward, op.cit., p.116.

The English Methodists even undertook to whip up enthusiasm among other Protestants for their co-religionists in Ireland. Commenting on the unfavourable Whig policies of 1837, the Watchman stated:

> "But, Protestants of England you, under God are to determine whether 'this counsel shall stand,' whether this policy shall be pursued, to the destruction of all that your Protestant fellow-subjects in Ireland hold sacred. Will you see their religion, their connection with Britain, their liberty, their property, their lives, immolated on the altar on Popery? If you resolve in the negative, then it is time to stop." 78

With so much at stake the 'No Politics' rule was unlikely to survive. In general, the English Methodists deferred to Irish opinions on Roman Catholicism and this suited the purposes of an increasingly conservative Wesleyan ministerial leadership. As a result the political reactions of the Irish Methodists were substantially the same as those in England, if more vigorously phrased. Their respective views on Catholic Emancipation, National Education amd Maynooth Endowment were harmonious. When the English Conference became more politically liberal in the later nineteenth century, the extreme Unionism of Northern Irish Methodism was an embarrassment. However, even in 1848 it was claimed that "in the great struggle between Popery and Protestantism - the enemies & the friends of Scriptural & spiritual religion - Ireland is not unlikely to be the battle-field."[79]

Following on in the military metaphor, the first major engagement in the "battle" was the campaign for Catholic Emancipation.

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78 Watchman, 15 Feb. 1837.

79 M.C.A. MSS. Robert Huston to the Wesleyan Community, 17 Sept. 1846. Quoted in Ward, op.cit., p.117.

APPENDIX

The Official links between the Irish and British Conferences, 1815-1846.

1815 Irish Conference, Dublin, July 7.

English Representative: Walter Griffith (President 1813-1814).

English Conference, Manchester, July 31.

Irish Representative: Matthew Tobias.

1816 Irish Conference, Dublin, July 5.

English Representative: Adam Clarke.

English Conference, London, July 29.

Irish Representative: Charles Mayne.

1817 Irish Conference, Dublin, July 4.

English Representative: Richard Reece (President).

English Conference, Sheffield, July 29.

Irish Representative: Matthew Tobias.

1818 Irish Conference, Dublin July 3.

English Representatives: John Gaulter (President), Jabez Bunting (Secretary).

English Conference, Leeds, July 27.

Irish Representatives: Samuel Steele and Matthew Tobias.

1819 Irish Conference, Dublin, July 1.

English Representatives: Jonathan Edmondsen(President) and George Marsden.

English Conference, Bristol, July 26.

Irish Representatives: John Stuart and Samuel Wood.

1820 Irish Conference, Dublin, July 7.

English Representatives: Jonathan Crowther (President), James Wood and Mr. Myles.

English Conference, Liverpool, July 26.

Irish Representatives: Samuel Wood and Matthew Tobias.

1821 Irish Conference, Dublin, July 6.

English Representatives: Jabez Bunting (President) and Joseph Entwistle.

English Conference, Manchester, July.

Irish Representatives: Henry Deery and Matthew Tobias.

1822 Irish Conference, Dublin, July 5.

English Representatives: George Marsden (President) and Robert Newton.

English Conference, London, July 31.

Irish Representatives: Samuel Wood and William Stewart.

1823 Irish Conference, Dublin, June 27.

English Representatives: Adam Clarke (President) and John Stamp.

English Conference, Sheffield, July 30.

Irish Representatives: Matthew Tobias and William Stewart.

1824 Irish Conference, Dublin, June 25.

English Representatives: H. Moore (President), R. Newton(Secretary), (Agent of the Missionary Committee for Irish Schools) and J.Taylor.

English Conference, Leeds, July 28.

Irish Representatives: Charles Mayne and John Stuart.

1825 Irish Conference, Cork, July 8.

English Representatives: R. Newton (President), R. Waddy, T.H. Bewley (Schools), Dr. Clarke, G. Morley (Missionary Secretary) and V. Ward.

English Conference, Bristol, July 27.

Irish Representatives: William Stewart and Thomas w. Doolittle.

1826 Irish Conference, Dublin, July 3.

English Representatives: J. Entwistle (President), J. Barker, G. Morley (Missionary Secretary) and T. Edwards (Schools).

English Conference, Liverpool, July 26.

Irish Representatives: Matthew Tobias and Thomas Waugh.

1827 Irish Conference, Belfast, July 2.

English Representatives: R. Watson (President), J. Bunting (Secretary) T. Roberts, and J. Mason (Missionary Secretary).

English Conference, Manchester, July 25.

Irish Representatives: John Stuart and William Reilly.

Missionary Deputation to Ireland: Martin and Newstead.

1828 Irish Conference, Dublin, July 1.

English Representatives: J. Stephens (President), and J. James (Missionary Secretary).

English Conference, London, July 30.

Irish Representatives: W. Stewart and M. Tobias.

Missionary Deputation: Dr. Townley, V. Ward, J. Stanley and T.H. Squance.

1829 Irish Conference, Cork, July 7.

English Representatives: J. Bunting (President), R. Newton (Secretary) and G. Morley (Missionary Secretary).

English Conference, Sheffield, July 29.

Irish Representatives: M. Tobias, T. Waugh and S. Wood.

Missionary Deputation: Burdsall, Alder, McNicholl and Close.

1830 Irish Conference, Dublin, July 6.

English Representatives: Dr. Townley (President), J. James (Missionary Secretary).

English Conference, Leeds, July 28.

Irish Representatives: M. Tobias, W. Stewart, and T. Waugh.

Missionary Deputation: Hoole (Schools), Anderson, Marsden and Taylor.

1831 Irish Conference, Belfast, July 6.

English Representatives: G. Morley (President), R. Newton (Secretary), J. James (Missionary Secretary), and E. Hoole (Schools).

English Conference, Bristol, July 27.

Irish Representatives: W. Stewart, T.W. Doolittle, and T. Waugh.

Missionary Deputation: Wood, Newstead, Buckley and Naylor.

1832 Irish Conference, Dublin, July 5.

English Representatives: G. Marsden (President), T. Lessey, J. Beecham (Missionary Secretary), E. Hoole (Schools).

English Conference, Liverpool, July 25.

Irish Representatives: W. Stewart, T. Waugh and T.W. Doolittle.

Missionary Deputation: Reece, Martin, Bell and Kay.

1833 Irish Conference, Cork, July 4.

English Representatives: R. Newton (President), J. Bunting, T. Lessey and E. Hoole (Schools).

English Conference, Manchester, July 31.

Irish Representatives: W. Stewart, T.W. Doolittle, and T. Waugh.

Missionary Deputation: Hannah, Duncan, Toase and Broadbent.

1834 Irish Conference, Dublin, July 3.

English Representatives: R. Treffry (President), R. Newton, J. Beecham (Missionary Secretary), and E. Hoole (Schools).

English Conference, London, July 30.

Irish Representatives: T. Waugh and W. Reilly.

Missionary Deputation: McNicholl, Stead, Scott and Young.

1835 Irish Conference, Belfast, July 3.

English Representatives: J. Taylor (President), R. Alder (Missionary Secretary), and E. Hoole (Schools).

English Conference, Sheffield, July 29.

Irish Representatives: W. Stewart, H. Deery and T. Waugh.

Missionary Deputation: Crowther, Murray, Atherton and Duncan.

1836 Irish Conference, Dublin, July 1.

English Representatives: R. Reece (President), R. Newton (Secretary), J. Beecham (Missionary Secretary).

English Conference, Birmingham, July.

Irish Representatives: W. Stewart and T. Waugh.

Missionary Deputation: Atherton, Hoswell, Lessey and Shaw.

1837 Irish Conference, Cork, June 30.

English Representatives: J. Bunting (President), R. Newton (Secretary), R. Alder (Missionary Secretary), and W.O. Croggan (Schools).

English Conference, Leeds, July 26.

Irish Representatives: W. Stewart, T. Waugh, W. Ferguson and R. Masaroon.

Missionary Deputation: Grindrod, Young, Turner and Roberts.

1838 Irish Conference, Dublin, June 22.

English Representatives: E. Grindrod (President), R. Newton (Secretary), E. Hoole (Missionary Secretary) and W.O. Groggan (Schools).

English Conference, Bristol, July 25.

Irish Representatives: T. Waugh and J.F. Mathews.

Missionary Deputation: Dixon, Banks, Anderson and Shaw.

1839 Irish Conference, Belfast, June 21.

English Representatives: T. Jackson (President), R. Newton (Secretary), J. Beecham (Missionary Secretary), and G.Marsden.

English Conference, Liverpool, July 31.

Irish Representatives; W. Stewart, T. Waugh, and W. Reilly.

Missionary Deputation: Grindrod, Farrar, Squance and Shrewsbury.

1840 Irish Conference, Dublin, June 19.

English Deputation: T. Lessey (President), and T. Jackson.

English Conference, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, July 29.

Irish Representatives: W. Stewart, T. Waugh and J.B. Gillman.

Missionary Deputation: Scott, Nelson, Lomas, Clough and Dawson.

1841 Irish Conference, Cork, June 25.

English Representatives: R. Newton (President), J. Bowers, and W.O. Croggan (Schools).

English Conference, Manchester, July 28.

Irish Representatives: T. Waugh, W. Stewart and H. Price.

Missionary Deputation: S. Jackson, Shaw, Martin, Cryer, and Young.

1842 Irish Conference, Dublin, June 24.

English Representatives: J. Dixon (President), R. Newton, J. Scott (Missionary Treasurer) and W.O. Croggan (Schools).

English Conference, London, July 27.

Irish Representatives: W. Stewart, T. Waugh and F. Tackaberry.

Missionary Deputation: Bell, Tindall, Farrar, Lawry and Squance.

1843 Irish Conference, Belfast, June 23.

English Representatives: Dr. Hannah (President), Dr. Newton (Secretary), J. Cusworth, Dr. Alder (Missionary Secretary), W.O. Croggan (Schools).

English Conference, Sheffield, July 26.

Irish Representatives: W. Stewart, T. Waugh and R. Masaroon.

Missionary Deputation: Galland, Young, McOwen, Tucker and Whitehouse.

1844 Irish Conference, Dublin, June 25.

English Representatives: J. Scott(President), Dr. Newton (Secretary), J. Beecham (Missionary Secretary).

English Conference, Birmingham, July.

Irish Representatives: W. Stewart, T. Waugh and J. Nelson.

Missionary Deputation: Stevenson, Boyce, Waddy, Hodson and Fox.

1845 Irish Conference, Cork, June 25.

English Representatives: J. Scott (acting President because Bunting was ill), Dr. Newton and W.O. Croggan (Schools).

English Conference, Leeds, July 30.

Irish Representatives: W. Stewart, T. Waugh and J.F. Mathews.

Missionary Deputation: Marsden, Squance, Hoseon, Stinson, Hodson and Jobson.

1846 Irish Conference, Dublin, June 24.

English Representatives: J. Stanley (President), Dr. Newton and J. Lomas.

English Conference, Bristol, July 29.

Irish Representatives: W. Stewart, T. Waugh and D. McAfee.

Missionary Deputation: Dr. Dixon, Davies, Osborn and Stinson.

III

METHODISM AND ROMAN CATHOLIC EMANCIPATION 1812-1826

"I conclude then, Sir, with moving:

> 'That this House will, early in the next session of parliament, take into its most serious consideration the state of the laws affecting his Majesty's Roman Catholic subjects in Great Britain and Ireland: with a view to such a final and conciliatory adjustment, as may be conducive to the peace and strength of the United Kingdom; to the stability of the Protestant establishment; and to the general satisfaction and concord of all classes of his Majesty's subjects." [1]

Canning's motion of 22nd June 1812 was carried by a large majority.[2] Amherst hailed it as the "first time in this century that the Catholic question was victorious in Parliament."[3] That indeed was so, but the victory was less impressive than at first appears, due to the actual wording of the motion. Contained in the majority there were many who had no intention of voting for a measure of Catholic Emancipation. The member for Newcastle - Mr Bootle - in declaring his support for the motion stated that, "he would not pledge himself to go one single step further."[4] Similarly Nicholas Vansittart, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, declared himself to be in favour of granting certain naval, military and civil privileges, "but among these, he did not mean to include the great question of legislative power."[5] Nevertheless, the majority was sufficiently large to disturb the anti-Emancipationists. Their fears must have deepened a week later when

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1 Canning's Motion, 22 June 1812. Hansard, Parl. Debates, xxiii, col.667.

2 The division was, ayes 235 noes 106; Majority in favour of the Resolution, 129.

3 W.J. Amherst, S.J., The History of Catholic Emancipation, ii. p.73.

4 Hansard, xxiii, 684.

5 Ibid., 687.

the Marquis Wellesley introduced a similar motion to the House of Lords, where it was only defeated by one vote in a large division.[6] Lord Eldon wrote concerning the session,

> "that unless the country will express its sentiments on the Roman Catholic claims, (if it has any sentiments respecting them, which I doubt), and that tolerably strongly, between Dissenters, Methodists and Papists, the Church is gone."[7]

The Methodist response to these events, can be partially understood from the career of Joseph Butterworth. From May until July 1811, Butterworth accompanied Dr Adam Clarke on a tour of Ireland. The Methodist layman was shown "the celebrated scene of the Battle of the Boyne" which was "the grand check to the Popish interest."[8] Ten days later they went to Londonderry, "famous for the siege it suffered from James II" when the "inhabitants were obliged to eat horses, dogs, cats, rats and every kind of animal."[9] Butterworth was further treated to a visit to Maynooth College which "costs our Government £9000 per annum for its support,"[10] and received an unexpected reminder of the Rebellion of the United Irishmen when a rebel general was captured after thirteen years of evasion.[11] Superimposed on all these impressions was the obvious poverty of the countryside, except of course in Ulster, which was strongly Protestant.

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6 Contents 74, proxies 52 - 126. Non-Contents 74 proxies 51 - 125.

7 Lord Eldon to Dr. Swire, 22 Sept. 1812 in H. Twiss, The Public and Private Life of Lord Chancellor Eldon, ii. p.225.

8 Recorded in the private Journal of Adam Clarke, in An Account of the Religious and Literary Life of Adam Clarke, by a member of his family, ii. p.255.

9 Ibid., p.263.

10 Ibid., p.276.

11 Ibid., p.276.

> "... the soil is miserably neglected: even the corn-fields are overgrown with weeds - no care being taken to cleanse the seed previously to its being sown: the fences are in the worst repair; the houses dirty and excessively mean. The children like their parents, half naked, and totally uncultivated." [12]

Butterworth's joy at the defeat of Lord Sidmouth's Bill, which he shared with the Irish Brethren,[13] must have been muted by these 'manifestations of Roman Catholicism'. The information which Butterworth had been gleaning from the Irish missionaries and the Hibernian Society, taken in conjunction with his own experience of Ireland obviously predisposed him to react unfavourably to the events in parliament in the summer of 1812. Once elected M.P. for Coventry in the autumn, he immediately made attempts to add to his Irish knowledge. On 4th November, three weeks before the opening of the new parliament, Butterworth issued a printed circular to Methodist preachers and others in Ireland, requesting information on "the state of Ireland and the real spirit and character of the Roman Catholics to illustrate the probable effects of the measure [Catholic Emancipation] in which-ever way it may be determined."[14] By the end of November letters from Ireland began to arrive in London. Rev. Peter Roe, a clergyman with Calvinistic views[15] wrote that,

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12 Ibid., p.255.

13 C.H. Crookshank, History of Methodism in Ireland, ii. p.352.

14 M.C.A. Printed Circular. Butterworth to Methodist preachers and others in Ireland, 4 Nov. 1812.

15 "This Mr. Roe is a most zealous Partisan for the Bible Society - Church Missions and Jews - but is so tinctured with Calvin^{m} that Method^{m} gets but little of his help."
M.M.H. MSS. George Hansbrow to Adam Clarke, 23 Nov. 1823.

"A few of my friends are advocates for emancipation – but it appears to me that they view the question in the abstract – without taking into account the principles and Spirit of Popery – if these ceased to exist, emancipation might be granted at once." [16]

Gideon Ouseley, a man of forceful opinions, wrote a long and rather controversial letter:

"You wish to know how Ireland could be saved, I wish I could fully inform you; But I will give you my judgment, and I am well satisfied to that of most of this Kingdom – could it be but effected.

1. Let Tythes be abolished and the Clergy, all the Clergy, Protestant and Roman be paid out of funds appointed for that purpose – these two things are the great grievances now and always complained of among the lower orders who are the vast body of the people. All the commotions that have been, in my memory, such as White boys, Defenders, Threshers, United men etc etc began on this pretence or ground ...

A second measure, and a very effectual one I am persuaded ... is namely to cause the youth to be educated in every direction...

Thirdly all 40s freeholders to be laid aside and none be permitted to vote but such as could read and write and be able to register an £8 or £10 freehold." [17]

Butterworth did not favour these rather radical suggestions which he crossed out in broad strokes. Ouseley's 'solutions' were not very far removed from later government policies but in 1812, those who viewed the Established Church as the principal bulwark against 'Popery', could not countenance the abolition of tithes or the payment of the Roman Catholic priesthood.

The problem facing Butterworth and Thomas Allan, his friend and co-member of the Methodist Committee of Privileges, was how to oppose Catholic Emancipation in an effective manner. Allan was appointed general Solicitor for the Methodist connexion in 1803 and he is

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16 M.C.A. MSS. Peter Roe to Joseph Butterworth, 24 Dec. 1812.

17 M.C.A. MSS. Gideon Ouseley to (Butterworth)?, 25 Nov. 1812.

"revealed by his papers to have been perhaps the most valuable servant of the connexion in that day."[18] He was not always on friendly terms with the London ministers,[19] but he was a scholarly[20] man with real political perception. When Lord Sidmouth was contemplating legislation to give more control over the licensing of preachers, it was Allan who asked the pertinent questions with regard to potential Methodist opposition:

> "The fourth thing I have to press upon your attention is the situation of the Methodists with the Legislature. Lord Sidmouth may possibly bring forward some motion before next Conference which may have for its object the checking of the progress of itinerancy. The question is supposing he should what must be the line of conduct of the Methodists. How are they to oppose Lord Sidmouth? Publicly or privately? By petition and to whom? Who are to be the active Agents? The Committee of Privileges or who? If the Committee, what distinctions are they to have and upon what principles are they to proceed? Are the Methodists to call themselves Churchmen or Dissenters or neither? Are they to unite with other Sects who may Petition and how far are they to co-operate? All these are serious questions." [21]

These questions were particularly important because, although the Committee of Privileges had been meeting for seven years, Sidmouth's Bill was the first substantial[22] attack on Methodist practice. Obviously significant precedents, in the realm of Methodist political action, were at stake. The events of the following year answered

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18 W.R. Ward, Religion and Society in England 1790-1850, p.57.

19 M.C.A. MSS. Thomas Allan to Joseph Benson, 15 Aug. 1808.

20 Thomas Allan left an impressive theological library to the Conference. Ward, op.cit., p.57.

21 M.C.A. MSS. Thomas Allan to Jabez Bunting, 28 July 1810.

22 The manuscript minutes of the Committee of Privileges record some less important disputes, e.g. Thomas Allan drew up a petition in 1803 to try to achieve the repeal of an act "passed in Jamaica which restrains our religious privileges."

Allan's questions. The Methodists opposed Sidmouth's Bill privately and publicly. The Committee of Privileges took an active part and encouraged petitioning.[23] Although the Methodists called themselves neither Churchmen nor Dissenters, they were prepared to co-operate with the latter to see the bill defeated.[24]

One year later Allan must have been asking himself the same questions, only this time in connection with the Catholic question. There was, of course, one important difference. In opposing Sidmouth's Bill the Committee of Privileges was simply doing what it was formed for, whereas Catholic Emancipation was not a direct attack on Methodism. Allan wrote to Butterworth in December 1812 mentioning the possibility of soliciting dissenting help.

> "If nothing can be done I apprehend that we should have a meeting of our own Brethren and let them see how our Friends in Ireland are situated and how they are likely to fare when this wicked plot contrived and supported by both wicked and infatuated men shall have been fully executed. One consequence will be an end to Methodism in Ireland. Are not the Methodists in England to take care of this privilege of preaching the Gospel in Ireland."[25]

Allan was uncertain how to act, but obviously he had not ruled out the possibility of the English Methodists taking some united action, presumably through the machinery of the Committee of Privileges. The Minutes of this Committee do not record any conversations or resolutions about Catholicism, but a letter written by one of its members reveals that the issue was mentioned;

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23 30,000 signatures were collected in a short period. Ward op.cit., p.59.

24 Bernard Semmel, The Methodist Revolution, p. 132.

25 M.C.A. MSS. Thomas Allan to Joseph Butterworth, 3 Dec. 1812.

"Mr Butterworth has obtained a wonderful mass of information from Ireland, relative to the conduct and views of the Catholics. It appears that they hold the very worst sentiment which their forefathers did three hundred years ago: and that if they have the power they wou'd not leave [one] Protestant alive in the Kingdom. At the same time it is believed that if Government does not comply with their request [for emancipation] there will be another rebellion. We believe this will be the less evil of the two. We are all of the opinion that the Methodists as a body should not come forward, but do all we can to promote petitions in the Church and sign with them. This should be done in every part of the Kingdom. But if we were to come forward in a public manner, it is highly probable that most or all our friends in Ireland wou'd be murdered." [26]

It appears that there was a unanimous agreement not to come forward "as a body", but the reason was one of expediency not principle. This failure to act politically stemmed from fear of retaliatory persecution rather than an unwillingness to give the church a specifically political role. This is somewhat surprising, but it does show the effectiveness of the stories from Ireland in promoting an almost irrational anti-catholicism. The unanimity of opinion expressed in the letter presumably indicates that Allan and Butterworth did not hold out for Committee of Privileges' participation in the forthcoming struggle. With the removal of this possibility and with the dissenters labouring under their own disabilities, the Methodist duo had virtually run out of alternatives. Butterworth had just returned from yet another trip to Ireland[27] and was obviously keen to take some positive action. Wilberforce, who met him on 7th December recorded that, "his communications show sad hostility of mind between Protestants and Roman Catholics."[28] On Wednesday 13th January 1813 a meeting was held in Butterworth's house, at which it was decided that a society be

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26 M.C.A. MSS. John Barber to George Marsden, 18 Jan. 1813.

27 R.I. Wilberforce and S. Wilberforce, The Life of William Wilberforce, iv. p.88.

28 Ibid.

formed for the defence and support of the Protestant religion and the British constitution.[29]

If Butterworth was the enthusiast behind this new development, Thomas Allan was clearly the scholar, and it was he who drew up the resolutions for the first meeting of the Protestant Union held on 22nd June.[30] One problem remained for the Methodist laymen. If the new society was to have any real political impact, it was necessary to attract the support of men with real prestige. Unfortunately for them, the natural leader of the evangelical political group was leaning slightly in favour of a measure of Emancipation. Wilberforce summed up his reasoning in a speech to the Commons on 9th March:

> "The grand consideration which weighed with him in the vote he should give, was, that the Catholics had already political power extended to them by the possession of the elective franchise; and it appeared to him to be absurd to prevent Catholics from holding seats in that House." [31]

In fact, the first chairman of the Protestant Union was Granville Sharp, a leading personality in the anti-slavery movement and first chairman also of the British and Foreign Bible Society.[32] Sharp was a very old man when he took on this post, but he seems to have thrown himself into its activities with "unabated vigour of mind."[33]

Two things stand out in the resolutions passed at the first meeting. The first is the obvious fear of the Roman Catholic Church

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29 M.C.A. MSS. A one page minute of the meeting.

30 M.C.A. MSS. A manuscript draft of these 20 resolutions has survived. They were printed in Papers of the Protestant Union, published by R. Bickerstaff. There was a series of eleven papers published at short intervals during the years 1813 and 1814.

31 Hansard xxiv. 1239. See also R.I. Wilberforce, op.cit.,iv. pp.94F.

32 G.R.R. Treasure, Who's Who in History, V. pp.43-45. Prince Hoare, Memoirs of Granville Sharp esq. (London 1820), pp.442-446.

33 Hoare, op.cit., p.445.

in Ireland.

> "From the extensive information now received, [no doubt from Butterworth] it is evident that much misapprehension prevails in this Country with respect to Ireland, and to the general Tenets and Spirit of the Roman Catholics in that part of the Empire." [34]

The meeting of the Catholics of the county of Dublin in November, at which it was resolved that no securities should be given in any measure of Emancipation, was singled out for condemnation.[35]

A second theme running through the resolutions is a clear distinction between "Political Power" and "Religious Toleration" - "the latter may be perfectly enjoyed without any material portion of the former."[36] These resolutions were circulated extensively in Ireland and all publications were sent to the Members of Parliament in both Houses.[37] The Protestant Union met almost weekly until 1st March; the next day it had its biggest disappointment. Grattan's motion,

> "that this House will resolve itself into a Committee of the whole House, to take into its most serious consideration the State of the Laws affecting his Majesty's Roman Catholic subjects in Great Britain and Ireland..." [38]

was passed by a majority of forty after a debate lasting four nights. Butterworth's vote was, of course, recorded with the minority, but he took no part in the debate. The result shattered the Protestant Union which, "finding its efforts ineffectual as to this great point, ceased from its exertions."[39] Its disappointment and apparent failure in March were dissipated by a successful conclusion to the matter in May. In a large assembly of the House of Commons on the 24th,

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34 First Paper of the Protestant Union.

35 Ibid., article 17.

36 Ibid., articles 1 and 3.

37 Hoare, op.cit., p.444.

38 Hansard, xxiv. 763.

39 Hoare, op.cit., p.444.

when the last stage of an emancipation bill was in a Committee of the whole House, the Speaker moved that the words "to sit and vote in either House of Parliament"[40] in the first clause be left out of the Bill. Abbot's amendment was carried by four votes and the bill was abandoned. This time Butterworth's vote was registered with the majority. In a strange piece of historical irony Butterworth's vote reflected the wishes of Dr. Milner, vicar-apostolic of the Midland district of England, and the Irish prelates. Their opposition stemmed from the clauses introduced by Canning between the first and second readings of the Bill. The uncompromising attitudes of Milner and the Irish Bishops were not shared by the Catholic Board in general, and by Charles Butler in particular. Bulter, a legal writer of some eminence, was prepared to give the Government a veto on the appointment of Catholic bishops. His conciliatory policy even extended toward the Methodists:

> "Mr Butler presents his respects of Mr Butterworth. He has lately heard, with great concern, that a publication called "the Roman Catholic Magazine" contained several paragraphs reflecting on the Methodists in general, and on some individuals in particular. Mr Butler begs leave to assure Mr Butterworth, that the magazine is far from being patronized by the Catholics; Mr Butler felt particular indignation at the mention made in it of his most honored and respected friend Doctor Adam Clarke, whom he considers an ornament of Human Nature."[41]

Clarke was obviously singled out as Butterworth's brother-in-law.[42] Two days after writing this letter, Butler issued his capable and moderate "address to the Protestants of Great Britain and Ireland."[43]

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40 Hansard, xxvi. 322.

41 M.C.A. MSS. Charles Butler to Joseph Butterworth 3 Feb. 1813.

42 C.H. Crookshank, History of Methodism in Ireland, ii. p.349.

43 Charles Butler, An Address to the Protestants of Great Britain and Ireland (Lincoln's Inn, 5th February 1813). 19pp.

The main thrust of the pamphlet was to show that the common objections against Roman Catholics having political power were based more on prejudice than on fact. Butler's attempt at reasoned conciliation did not impress Thomas Allan or the Protestant Union. They quickly printed an extract from the Kilkenny Chronicle,[44] showing clearly that Butler's views were not in harmony with Dr Milner and the Irish Roman Catholics. Having done that, Thomas Allan wrote a long and scholarly reply to Butler's pamphlet, in the papers of the Protestant Union.[45] In his Reminiscences,[46] Butler acknowledged Allan's work:

> "A tolerable crop of answers to it (his own pamphlet) appeared, but none obtained much public attention. The ablest was published by a society of gentlemen, who styled themselves, The Protestant Association (should be Protestant Union) the late worthy and learned Granville Sharpe was their president: it expressed some of the prejudices of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but was written with temper and moderation." [47]

Allan and Butterworth spared no effort in the years 1812 and 1813 to defeat Catholic Emancipation. One would certainly not want to attribute the eventual failure of Grattan's Bill to their actions; their significance was for Methodism and its political development. These years gave Methodist anti-catholicism a political dimension for the first time since Wesley's opposition to the 1778 Relief Act. It is

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44 Extract from the Kilkenny Chronicle, 23 Feb. 1813.

45 An Appeal to the Protestants of Great Britain and Ireland in Reply to a late address by Charles Butler. This reply appeared in the Papers of the Protestant Union nos. 4, 5, 6, 9, 10. These articles were produced anonymously, but Thomas Allan is declared to be the author in the Catalogue of the Allan Library p.284.

46 Charles Butler, Reminiscences of Charles Butler, Esq. (London 1822).

47 Ibid., p.250.

certainly true that its opposition was still quite muted, especially in the light of the Committee of Privileges' decision not to come forward "as a body", but even its attitude was governed by the demands of the situation in Ireland rather than a definite principle of non-involvement. Nevertheless, its decision in 1812 was a significant one, since it ensured that the Committee of Privileges would not be at the forefront of Methodist opposition to Catholic Emancipation.

The opposition in 1812-13 came primarily but not exclusively from the laity. Their decision to operate through an inter-denominational protestant group helped preserve the old Wesleyan ideal of 'no politics'. However, 'honest Butterworth'[48] was a well-known Methodist, and he had no scruples in using the Methodist missionary network in Ireland to glean his information. At least at this stage he did not retell his Irish stories in the debates in the House of Commons. Methodist anti-catholicism had not yet been voiced in the British Parliament.

Methodist political involvement in 1812-13 had come a long way since Wesley's brief statement in support of the Protestant Association. The two most influential and able laymen in the Connexion had made no secret of their position. A Wesleyan Methodist preacher, W. West in the Liverpool circuit,[49] wrote a strongly worded pamphlet in opposition to Catholic claims. The pamphlet was a distorted recapitulation of Roman Catholic history in Ireland, especially the Rebellion of the

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48 Wilberforce, op.cit., p.27.

49 W. West, Observations and Reflections on what is styled Catholic Emancipation containing arguments against the Admission of Roman Catholics to a Participation of Political Power in the British State (Liverpool 1812).

United Irishmen. West also wrote two letters to the Liverpool Courier, outlining his objections. Appropriately, one of the candidates for Liverpool in the 1812 election was George Canning who described the Catholic question as a "bugbear of tremendous size throughout all these counties."[50] West's literary contributions in 1812 do not appear to have embarrassed the Wesleyan Methodists since his pamphlet and his two letters were sold by Thomas Blanshard, the Methodist Book Steward in City Road, London.[51] It is significant that West's pamphlet was produced in Liverpool, a city with a substantial Irish immigrant population. In the 1830s and 40s when the 'No Popery' cry was at its strongest, Liverpool and Manchester were important centres.

In spite of the efforts of Allan and Butterworth, the Methodist response to the Catholic question in 1812 was quite a muted one. The Committee of Privileges was not brought out and there was no petitioning from individual Methodist congregations.[52] Even if political opposition was not explicit, the trends of policy were clear, and once again Ireland was the catalyst.

After 1813 the Catholic question was not debated with the same expectancy. The vetoist, anti-vetoist split among the Roman Catholics was crippling,[53] and the years 1814-1819 saw the Catholic agitation at its lowest ebb. The dissolution of the Catholic Board and the apparent

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50 Canning to Wellesley, 19 Oct. 1812. quoted by W. Hinde, George Canning, p.259.

51 W. West, op.cit.

52 In the Thos. Allan MSS. there is a one page petition from the Wesleyan Methodist Society at Bristol, but the House of Commons Journal does not record its submission. Perhaps Methodist signatures were added to the petition from the inhabitants of Bristol.

53 Annual Register (1814), p.260.

ineffectiveness of the Catholic Association merely added to the gloom. Perhaps the most significant factor in these years was the steady emergence of O'Connell as the clear political leader of the Irish Catholics. O'Connell, was a thorn in Peel's political flesh in the years 1813-1815,[54] and was soon to become equally unpopular with the Methodists.

But though the years 1813-19 were ones of relative inactivity for the Catholic claims, the Methodist Committee of Privileges had to face that other great enemy of evangelical religion, infidelity, in the guise of working-class political agitation. The problem seemed particularly acute in 1817, with the twin distresses of unemployment and the high cost of food. The Committee of Privileges met in February under the chairmanship of Joseph Entwistle and,

> "After considering the dreadful tendency of the various Blasphemous and seditious Tracts now in active circulation among the lower classes of Society and the advantage taken of the present distresses of the Country by evil disposed persons to disturb the political peace and excite a spirit of irreligion insubordination and violence," [55]

it was resolved to send out an address[56] to the Preachers which was to be read to the Methodist Societies. In this lengthy address there is the same political dualism as in the Methodist response to the Catholic question. On the one hand it is stated quite categorically that the Methodists have no wish to interfere, "with any question merely of a political nature."[57] However, realising that the issue of the address was in itself a political action, the Committee sought to justify it on

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54 N. Gash, Mr Secretary Peel, p.163 ff.

55 M.C.A. MSS. Minutes of the Committee of Privileges, 4, 5 Feb. 1817.

56 Appendix.

57 Ibid.

the ground that "some of the best interests of religion, and of social order, are deeply involved in the present agitations."[58] This apparent dualism shown particularly by the London Methodists was giving Wesleyan Methodism a distinctly conservative political bias.

1819, the year of Peterloo, saw the climax of the enmity between Methodism and radicalism. On Monday 11th October there was a huge meeting at Newcastle to protest against the "Manchester Murders".[59] A number of Methodists attended and one of the local preachers, W.H. Stephenson, made a speech condemning the Manchester magistrates. When the circuit superintendent found difficulty in suspending Stephenson,[60] Bunting brought the case before the Committee of Privileges which resolved that "Mr Stephenson should be immediately suspended from the Local Preachers' Plan and from all official duties in the Methodist Connexion."[61] Another address was drawn up recommending preachers to expel members who took part in factious and disloyal gatherings.[62] Official Wesleyanism, through its political committee, made no secret of its stance on these issues, which was certainly not universally popular.[63] As a result, there was a larger decrease in Methodist membership for 1820 than in any other year before 1851.[64] W.R. Ward

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58 Ibid.

59 Robert Pilter to Jabez Bunting 13 Oct. 1819. In W.R. Ward The Early Correspondence of Jabez Bunting, p.21.

60 Robert Pilter to Jabez Bunting, 6 Nov. 1819. Ibid.

61 M.C.A. MSS. Committee of Privileges Minutes 12 Nov. 1819.

62 Ward, op.cit., p.25.

63 J.B. Holroyd to Jabez Bunting 23 Dec. 1819. Ibid.

64 There was a decrease of 4,688 members. Hall's Circuits and Ministers p. 608. Adam Clarke blamed this decrease on the progress of Radicalism. W.R. Ward, Religion and Society in England, p. 93.

has stated with some justification that "Peterloo had for ever severed official Methodism from urban revivalism."[65]

The year of Peterloo was also the year of the serious re-appearance of the Catholic question in English politics. In February there was a large and influential meeting of Protestants in Dublin to petition for Catholic relief. In March there was an aggregate meeting of Catholics in Dublin, addressed by O'Connell. In April the Protestant Union, with Butterworth and Allan in attendance convened a meeting with Stephen Cattley in the chair.[66] Fourteen resolutions[67] were passed along similar lines to those of 1813, with one exception. The Pope's decision to reconstitute the Society of Jesus in 1814[68] had not gone unnoticed. Although the English Jesuits still had to go abroad for ordination, the growth of the establishment at Stonyhurst worried the Protestant Union.[69] It provoked Butterworth to write to a preacher stationed at Preston requesting "all the information you can Furnish me respecting the Rom. Catholics and especially the Jesuits, in order to communicate to Persons in important stations - but it must be very correct."[70] Butterworth's desire for accurate information indicates his willingness to make use of it should the need arise.

Early the following month, Grattan presented the Catholic petitions, and had his subsequent motion defeated by only two votes in

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65 Ibid. p.93.

66 Held at the London Tavern, 17 Apr. 1819.

67 Some manuscript editions and the final printed circular (3 pp) exist in Thos. Allan collection, M.C.A.

68 E.I. Watkin, Roman Catholicism in England from the Reformation to 1950, p.164.

69 Resolution 13.

70 M.C.A. MSS. J. Butterworth to James Bogie 20 May 1819.

a large division.[71] Of more interest to Butterworth was the submission of a Bill to the House of Lords "to relieve Roman Catholics from taking the declaratory oaths against Transubstantiation and the Invocation of Saints."[72] In a hastily written note to Allan, Butterworth described this Bill of Lord Grey's as "the most insidious and destructive attempt against the Protestant cause we have had yet."[73] On the back of the Bill which Butterworth had sent, Allan wrote that it was "the first step to the establishment of that Religion which affords no Toleration or peace or security to any other Communion."[74] For the Methodist laymen, these two oaths were even more important than those of Abjuration and Supremacy. At this point, they took the decision to help in the construction and presentation of a petition from the inhabitants of the Parish of St Dunstan's-in-the-West,[75] by-passing the Methodist political structure in order to act through their own Anglican parish. Once again the Methodists witnessed a happy conclusion to this matter when the Bill was defeated on its second reading by a comfortable majority.[76]

The means whereby Butterworth and Allan opposed these measures poses some difficult questions. There is no evidence that the Committee

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71 Hansard, xl. 79, ayes 241, noes 243.

72 Ibid., xl. 748.

73 M.C.A. MSS. Joseph Butterworth to Thomas Allan 29 May 1819, with a copy of the proposed Bill.

74 M.C.A. MSS. Pencilled note by Allan on the back of Butterworth's letter.

75 A copy of the resolutions passed at a meeting of the parish inhabitants exists in the M.C.A. The meeting took place on 2 June 1819 with the Rev. Richard Lloyd in the chair.

76 Hansard, xl. 1067.

of Privileges met to discuss Grey's Bill. This does not conclusively mean that there was no meeting, since the manuscript minutes of this Committee's transactions are by no means complete,[77] but nor does the correspondence of the two laymen record any meeting. If, as seems likely, the Committee of Privileges did not discuss the Catholic question in 1819 then one must ask why. Was the Irish Methodist fear of persecution still a strong one? This may well be so, since there was still an extensive correspondence coming into the London office from the Irish preachers.[78] Had Butterworth and Allan realised that the Catholic question was too close to 'real politics' at a time when the Methodist preachers were urging non-involvement because of the pressures from radicalism? This is possible but unlikely. The Methodist laymen saw their opposition to Catholic claims and the preacher's opposition to radicalism as equally valid aspects of the campaign against the twin Methodist bugbears of 'Popery and Infidelity'. There is a third possibility. Was the influence of Butterworth and Allan on the Committee of Privileges waning due to the strongly increased representation from the preachers? At its foundation in 1803 this Committee had a majority of laymen, a situation which had changed dramatically by 1819. Jabez Bunting was one of the preachers sitting on the Committee in 1819, and he was well-known for his staunch advocacy of political non-involvement.

For whatever reasons, and perhaps it was the aggregate of many, Butterworth and Allan decided in 1819, as they had done in 1813,

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77 Generally only decisions and resolutions are recorded.

78 One particularly informative and frightening letter was written by W. Reilly to Joseph Taylor (Secretary of the Missionary Society 1818-1820) on 15 Dec. 1818. W.M.M.S. MSS.

to conduct their opposition to Catholic Emancipation from outside the Methodist Connexion. This was important, for although the Methodists were generally known to be opposed to Catholic claims, they had not "as a body" expressed their political attitudes. Indeed, in the lists of petitions for and against Catholic Emancipation in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the Wesleyan Methodists are conspicuous by their absence. The 'no-politics' rule had been subjected to pressures from many directions but the 1820 s dawned with it still intact;at least superficially, for a picture of Wesleyan political attitudes was slowly being formed.

Butterworth began the third decade of the century as he had begun the second. A circular[79] was sent out to the Irish preachers requesting information about the Roman Catholics of Ireland and in particular their trustworthiness should Catholic Emancipation be granted. The replies were unanimous.

> "You desire my opinion respecting their being entrusted with political power. My dear sir I am fully persuaded it would be highly dangerous to Protestants in Ireland..." [80]
>
> "Protestants would be driven to defend their liberties at the expence [sic] of Blood." [81]
>
> "In my judgment, political power in the hands of R.C. would greatly convulse this part of the country."[82]
>
> "I can see no change for the better in the Roman Catholics of Ireland. I firmly believe they are as bigoted as ever they were, and therefore, that it would be as unsafe to trust them now with political power as at any former period."[83]

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79 The circular was probably dated 15 Apr. 1820.

80 M.C.A. MSS. Henry Deery to Joseph Butterworth, 13 May 1820.

81 Ibid.

82 M.C.S. MSS. Andrew Hamilton to Joseph Butterworth, 19 May 1820.

83 M.C.A. MSS. John Stuart to Joseph Butterworth, 29 May 1820. See also: William Stewart to Joseph Butterworth, 12 May 1820.

Henry Deery told Butterworth that he had conversed widely with friends in the Irish Connexion and he was persuaded that the opinions expressed above were "in agreement with the judgment of our whole connexion."[84] Obviously the Irish preachers, many of whom began their itinerancy in the years after the 1798 rebellion,[85] were in no mood for concession.

Less than a year after these replies were written, the Catholic question was given a fresh impetus in the House of Commons. On 28th February W.C. Plunket, the new parliamentary pro-catholic leader, brought forward his motion for a committee to consider the Catholic claims. His motion passed by a majority of six. It was, in fact, the first pro-catholic majority since 1813. Butterworth missed the debate and the subsequent division, but this was no indication of his weakening. Just one week after Plunket's motion was passed, there was a meeting of the inhabitants of St Dunstan-in-the-West.[86] Allan had meticulously drafted a petition[87] which was approved by the meeting. Butterworth presented it on March 12, when he made his first parliamentary speech on Roman Catholic claims.[88] He felt that if the Bills before the House should pass then they "would transfer discontent from Ireland to the Protestant population of this country as well as afford great dissatisfaction to the Protestants there." His principal

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84 M.C.A. MSS. Henry Deery to Joseph Butterworth, 13 May 1820.

85 Of those who replied to Butterworth's circular, John Stuart began itinerating in 1794, Henry Deery and Gideon Ouseley in 1799 and William Stewart in 1800.

86 The meeting took place on 6 Mar. 1821 with Rev. Richard Lloyd in the chair.

87 The Manuscript original is in the Thomas Allan MSS.

88 Hansard, N.S., iv. 1184-1186.

objections, however, were occasioned by the intolerance of the Roman Catholic Church and the supremacy of the pope. His speech concluded with an evangelical paradox, that he must refuse Catholic claims in the interests of civil and religious liberty. This speech was significant, not for its effect on the House but for its implications for Methodism. Butterworth was known to be a Methodist, having earlier spoken in favour of Wesleyan missions. He was also then the only Methodist M.P. For those unaware of the complexities of the Wesleyan political framework, it seemed obvious that Butterworth was representing Methodist opinion. In a sense this was true, but he did not have the sanction of the Committee of Privileges.

In spite of the internal Catholic quarrels over the Veto, the ultra-protestants were concerned that a measure of emancipation might pass. Allan communicated these fears to his son:

> "I am very glad Cambridge and Oxford have petitioned against the Cath^{c} claims as from the insidious and covert manner in which they were presented to parl^{t} I was afraid that matter wo'd pass without exciting any attention." 89

Once again the Methodist laymen had cause for satisfaction, when the Bill was finally defeated in the Lords after a firm and impressive speech from Lord Chancellor Eldon. However, they had not long to wait before their energies were called upon yet again. The occasion was Lord Nugent's motion in 1823 to extend certain benefits to the British Catholics. Having been excluded from the Franchise Act of 1793, Nugent proposed to give them the parliamentary franchise and the same eligibility for civil office as the Irish Catholics. He argued persuasively that if the Irish Catholics had been given the

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89 M.C.A. MSS. Thomas Allan to his son Thomas, 15 Mar. 1821.

franchise at a time of national emergency then surely the "innocent tranquility" of the British Catholics "should entitle them to our sympathy."[90] Some of the anti-Catholics within the Government were prepared to support the motion; Peel failed to see "any danger in the measure." In spite of his speech, the ultra-Protestants, Butterworth included, were firmly opposed to Nugent's motion. When the motion was debated in the Commons on 30th June, the Methodist M.P. delivered a strongly anti-Catholic speech. Taking Ireland as his example, he claimed that the elective franchise was only a prelude to demands for more "extensive privileges", and spoke against the intolerant principles of the Roman Catholic Church, especially shown in the conduct of the Jesuits. Once again, the speech concluded with the evangelical paradox that, as "a sincere friend to religious freedom... he opposed this Bill."[91] He was strongly challenged by Joseph Hume, the radical member for the Aberdeen burghs. He called the Methodists "Protestant Jesuits", and declared that the Church of England had more to fear from them than from the Roman Catholics:

> "... the government ought to look after the Methodists, instead of the Catholics. For the last fifty years they had shown themselves most anxious in making proselytes, and most assiduous in their hostility to religious liberty; and he must say, that he believed no Roman Catholic had ever expressed such intolerant opinions as the hon. gentleman had uttered that night." 92

Hume's speech was full of personal invective, but it does indicate that the conflict between Roman Catholics and radicals on the one hand, and Methodists on the other, was increased by political pressure.

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90 Hansard N.S., iv. 1184-1186.

91 Ibid., 1347.

92 Ibid.

With a meeting in the spring of 1823 Daniel O'Connell and Richard Sheil began a new era in the Catholic debate. They formed a Catholic Association "to adopt all such legal and constitutional measures as may be most useful to obtain Catholic emancipation."[93] The early progress of the new association was slow and undistinguished until a one penny, associate membership scheme was introduced early in 1824. The effect of the "Catholic Rent" was startling. It marked the transition of the Catholic Association from a small club into an impressive national movement. Not only was the scheme financially successful but it engaged the support of the parish clergy and great numbers of the Irish peasantry. The new association reached a much wider section of the population than the Volunteer movement had ever done. This apparent popularity posed a real difficulty to Butterworth and Allan. Much of their campaign had been based on the principle "That with regard to Ireland, we can see no practical advantage to be derived to the great mass of her population by complying with the demands of the Roman Catholics."[94] Of course, the Methodists could still argue that the Irish peasantry was manipulated by political agitators and the priesthood. Perhaps Michael Collins, parish priest of Skibbereen, was closer to the truth in asserting that the denial of full political rights was not felt by the peasantry "as a practical and immediate grievance", but rather, "it is felt by them as a cause why they have not the same confidence in those in power as the favoured

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93 "Rules and Regulations of the Catholic Association of Ireland." Wyse, Historical Sketch, ii. Appendix XIV, pXXXVII.

94 Resolution xi. adopted at a meeting of the Protestant Union, 17 Apr. 1819.

classes have, and why they are oppressed, because they consider themselves to be looked on as belonging to a degraded caste."[95]

The Methodists were thus forced into a more paternalistic apologetic for their activities in Ireland. For, remarkable as it might seem, the Roman Catholic peasantry was not only deluded by the priesthood, but was now paying a penny a month for the "privilege." If that was the insult, the injury was soon to follow in the parliamentary debates of 1825. It had become obvious that the growth of the Catholic Association was too much of a threat for the government to ignore. The ministers' intention towards it were announced in the King's speech, which expressed "ardent wishes for its speedy annihilation."[96]

Meanwhile, Butterworth was preparing for the new parliamentary session, in his usual way, by writing letters to Ireland requesting information:

> "As some difference of opinion exists on this side of the water, respecting the propriety of allowing the Roman Catholic Association to continue its sittings in Dublin and to go on collecting the Roman Catholic Rent, I should be much obliged by your opinion on the subject, and by the statement of any Facts well authenticated, as to the effects produced in your Neighbourhood by the proceedings of the Association and by the Collection of the Rent." [97]

On the second day of the new parliamentary session, Butterworth listened to a speech which disturbed him greatly. Maurice Fitzgerald, the member for Kerry, began tamely enough by denying that the Catholic Association was a source of potential danger. He then moved on to the Catholic Rent which he argued was not substantially different from certain other subscriptions:

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95 Quoted by J.C. Beckett, The Making of Modern Ireland, p.300.

96 Hansard, N.S. xii. 120.

97 M.C.A. MSS. Joseph Butterworth to ? , ? Feb. 1825.

> "That of the Methodist Conference, for example, which was infinitely larger in amount, and which was unquestionably applied to political purposes."[98]

Fitzgerald also alluded to the strong Methodist political pressure in the previous session over a missionary trial in Demerara. The Kerry M.P. was hopelessly inaccurate in his facts. The incident in Demerara had no direct connection with the Methodists. The missionary involved in the debate was an Independent minister[99] sent out by the London Missionary Society. Fitzgerald made the mistake of attributing all evidence of "religious enthusiasm" to the Methodists. Butterworth was not slow to point out his adversary's error, and insisted that the Catholic Rent and the Methodist Conference money were in no sense analogous. He argued that subscriptions to the Catholic Association were made under compulsion and were used for political purposes whereas, "The Methodists had never interfered in any political question, and the objects of the subscriptions were entirely religious."[100] Fitzgerald realised that he had gone too far and softened his remarks, but the Methodists had not heard the end of the matter.

Brougham took the same tack, only in a more informed manner, in the subsequent debate on the "Unlawful Societies in Ireland Bill." Armed with a copy of the Methodist Conference minutes, he set out to compare the financial organisation of the Methodists and the Catholic Association. He concluded that there was compulsion of a particular kind in the Methodist contributions. If, for example, a certain district was deficient in its giving then the chairman was to make a "strict enquiry" into the reasons;

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98 Hansard, N.S. xii. 149.

99 Brougham establishes this in a speech made on 1 June 1824, Hansard, N.S. xi. 962.

100 Hansard, N.S. xii. 120.

> "I'll warrant me, Sir, that inquiry is strictly made; for there is nothing more inquisitorial than religious zeal, particularly when it is directed to financial objects." [101]

Brougham took up Butterworth's point that the Methodists had no political activities by casually referring to the Committee of Privileges, a particularly telling blow, since the Dover M.P. was still a member of the committee. Brougham's main contention was not that the government should legislate against the Methodists, but that it would be hypocrisy to act against the Catholic Association which was apparently organised in a similar way.

Once again the burden of replying fell to Butterworth as the sole Methodist representative. He pointed out that the Committee of Privileges was not a political committee in the accepted sense, since it was convened for the specific purpose of guarding Methodist privileges. He then made use of one of his letters from Ireland to show that the Catholic Rent was in no way a voluntary contribution.[102] His speech was received badly by the House and throughout the debate there was a certain antipathy toward the Methodists. Other advocates of "serious religion" in the Commons were reluctant to defend the Connexion, which had left the fold of the Established Church. The Evangelical Anglicans were not averse to soliciting Methodist support when they had common interests, but clearly Wesley's "sins" had not yet been forgiven. It is a remarkable historical irony that the Methodists, who were consistent opponents of Catholic claims, should have been compared to O'Connell's Catholic Association. At least there was some consolation for them in the success of the Unlawful Societies Bill.

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101 Ibid., 511.

102 Ibid., 519-520.

The consolation was short-lived, for, if there was any constant factor in the politics of the 1820 s it was the agitation for Catholic emancipation. This kind of relentless pressure has a tendency to push opinions to extremes. Only three days after the Unlawful Societies Bill was given its third reading, Burdett moved for a committee of the whole House to consider the laws affecting Roman Catholics. The motion was carried by thirteen votes, and a Bill based upon the resolutions passed in committee, was given its first reading on 23rd March. This Bill was a strong challenge for two reasons: the Catholic party in the House of Commons had been strengthened, partly through Canning's prestige as Foreign Minister, and the Relief Bill was introduced in a particularly subtle way. The main Bill was to be accompanied by two separate measures to try to lessen protestant hostility. These so-called 'wings' were the abolition of the 40s freehold franchise in the Irish counties, and the state payment of the Catholic clergy.[103]

There was obviously a strong possibility of these measures passing the Commons and, perhaps as a consequence, the Methodist opposition became more widespread than on any earlier occasion. At a large anti-Catholic meeting at Spitalfields in mid-April, the majority of the speakers were "Wesleyan Dissenters."[104] When copies of an anti-Catholic petition were sent to Methodist, Congregational and Baptist ministers in Manchester, the Methodists were the only group who displayed them to their congregations.[105] This fact was mentioned in Parliament by George Philips after Peel had presented the petition from Manchester and Salford.[106] This apparent loophole in the normally tight

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103 G.I.T. Machin, The Catholic Question in English Politics 1820 to 1830, pp.42-64.
104 The Times, 13 Apr. 1825.
105 Machin, op.cit., p.55.
106 Hansard N.S. xiii. 484.

Methodist discipline on political affairs is mildly surprising, especially since the Chairman of the Manchester district was the Conference president, Robert Newton.[107] Also stationed in Manchester in 1825 was the influential Jabez Bunting, who believed very strongly at this stage, that the Methodists should not participate in politics.[108]

Meanwhile, in the Commons, Butterworth had prepared himself for his customary opposition to concession. He had sent yet another circular letter[109] to his friends in Ireland, which produced predictable results. When Spring Rice observed "that the feelings of the Protestants of Ireland were daily and hourly becoming more favourable to the interests of their Catholic brethren,"[110] Butterworth deployed his carefully selected information to refute him. Maurice Fitzgerald, an old adversary of the Methodist M.P., tellingly pointed out that "If any hon. member were to open a shop in this country for the reception of tales of bigotry and hypocrisy and intolerance, there was no doubt but he would find ample contributions to it."[111] If the Manchester petition, and the anti-catholicism of the Wesleyan platform speakers were tainting Methodism with bigotry in the country, then Butterworth was producing exactly the same effect in the House of Commons.

The efforts of the Methodists were to no avail, because the Relief Bill passed its third reading on 10th May. The remaining hope

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107 Methodist Magazine (1824), p.624.

108 T.P. Bunting, The Life of Jabez Bunting, D.D., p.214.

109 Hansard N.S. xiii. 483.

110 Ibid., 481.

111 Ibid., 483-484.

was that the Lords would reject it. To that effect, Butterworth prepared a petition for James Wood, with orders to send a printed copy to the Earl of Eldon.[112] Mysteriously, he commanded Wood not to "mention my name to his Lordship nor to any Person whatever." Perhaps Butterworth was becoming increasingly aware that he had acquired a reputation for being Methodist and anti-Catholic, and saw no point in reinforcing it. The Relief Bill, as expected, was defeated in the Lords; another respite had been gained. With the Commons increasingly disposed to grant a measure of emancipation and with the pressure from Ireland gaining momentum, in spite of the Unlawful Societies Act, it seemed only a matter of time before Catholic relief was carried.

In 1826, the Methodists lost their only parliamentary representative through death. Richard Watson preached the funeral oration at Great Queen Street Chapel on 9th July:

> "It is a matter of notoriety that he took an active and zealous part in Parliament, in opposing the concession of political power to the Roman Catholics; and that, not only by the part he took in the debates on that question, but by the communication of various facts obtained by his visits to Ireland, and his extensive correspondence with intelligent friends in that country, he made a great impression upon the opinions of many..." 113

Butterworth was firmly within the early nineteenth century, evangelical ethos. He abhorred Roman Catholicism but he loved Roman Catholics. He opposed Catholic Emancipation because he loved religious toleration and liberty. Ireland's economic plight was due to the darkness of its superstition. Consequently only a spiritual and moral solution would suffice. To that end Butterworth advocated education in

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112 M.C.A. MSS. Joseph Butterworth to James Wood, 14 May 1825.

113 Richard Watson, A Sermon on the Death of Joseph Butterworth, Esq. (London 1826). 33 pp.

Ireland (albeit of a specific type), he was zealous for the distribution of Bibles and tracts, and he passionately supported the missionary enterprise. He was a representative Evangelical and the identikit picture could be completed by stressing his opposition to Negro Slavery and his participation in the many philanthropic societies which proliferated in the first quarter of the century.

But Butterworth was a Methodist, at a time when the Anglican Evangelicals looked upon the term with something less than enthusiasm. Wilberforce referred to him as "Honest Butterworth" which, "is unhappily more than a little like one of Hannah More's condescending characters of the upper class."[114] For the Anglicans, Butterworth was tinged with "methodistical enthusiasm", an opinion confirmed by the lack of subtlety in his parliamentary speeches. The Methodists got little support from the Anglican Evangelicals in their campaign against Catholic Emancipation, perhaps because their acknowledged parliamentary leader, Wilberforce, was in favour of concession.[115]

During the first twenty-five years of the nineteenth century, Butterworth and Allan, the two most influential laymen in the Connexion, gave Methodist anti-Catholicism a political direction. It is true that the Wesleyans 'as a body' had not committed themselves to opposing Catholic Emancipation. It is also true that Butterworth and Allan generally worked through extra-Methodist institutions. However, if the

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114 F.K. Brown, Fathers of the Victorians, p.505.

115 R.I. Wilberforce and S. Wilberforce, The Life of William Wilberforce, IV, pp.94-100.
Wilberforce was urged to take up Ireland in 1807 but he did not do so.
Ibid., iii. p.309.

Wesleyans could claim political neutrality in theory, they could hardly do so in practice. Public speeches had been made, pamphlets printed, and petitions signed. Letters had been written to the press and speeches had been made in Parliament. As Watson said of Butterworth it was a "matter of notoriety" that the Wesleyan Methodists were firmly opposed to any measure of Catholic relief.

One can see clearly in the life of Wesley, in the missionary letters of the Irish preachers and in the information gathered by Butterworth, that Ireland in general and Irish Catholicism in particular were an important catalyst. In 1826 with Butterworth dead, a general election pending and with Bunting's influence growing steadily,[116] how would the Methodists meet the increasing pressure from O'Connell and his Catholic Association?

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116 Jabez Bunting was in favour of a measure of Catholic Emancipation T.P. Bunting, op.cit., p.215.

APPENDIX

Manuscript Minutes of the Methodist Committee of Privileges, 4th and 5th February 1817. An address was drawn up to be sent to the preachers:

"Dear Brethren,

At a time when great Distress is experienced by multitudes, in different parts of the United Kingdom, from the dearness of some articles of provision, and the want of employment; and when advantage is taken of this by many ill disposed persons, to excite and spread a spirit of infidelity, discontent, disloyalty, and insubordination, we hope we shall not be thought chargeable with an unreasonable intrusion, if, being appointed to watch over the privileges of our Connexion, we express, in such an afflictive crisis of affairs as the present, our deep concern that all the members of our large body, should continue to manifest their loyalty, by their peaceable and orderly conduct. We would always wish studiously to avoid interference with any question merely of a political nature; but some of the best interests of religion, and of social order, are deeply involved in the present agitations of the public mind...

It is with pleasure that the Committee recognise the uniform attachment, shown by the Methodist societies at Large to the person of the monarch, and the Constitution of the Country; and they recollect how, at different critical and unquiet former periods, they have maintained a peaceable demeanour, and filled up the civil, social, and religious duties of life, in the most exemplary manner. But in the present season of unparalleled distress they feel anxious to prevent every member of the Methodist Society, from being misled by the delusive arts of designing men; and to guard them in the most solemn manner against attending tumultuous assemblies; joining themselves by oath, or otherwise, to illegal political societies, and engaging in any projects, contrary to the duties of true Christians and loyal subjects."

Joseph Entwistle, Chairman
Thomas Blanshard, Secretary.

IV

METHODISM AND ROMAN CATHOLIC EMANCIPATION 1826-1829.

> "If you send Members favourable to Popery however you may hate it the conclusion will be that you are favourable to it norwithstanding all the petitions you may send against.
>
> For it will be incredible that you should be unfavourable to Popery who send Members to support it. Do not flatter yourselves that the struggle is over because the question was not stirred in the Session of 1826." [1]

Thomas Allan was right. The "struggle" was certainly not over, and in the campaign against Catholic Emancipation, the general election of 1826 had obvious significance. The ultra-protestants had felt for some time that the House of Commons did not represent the anti-catholic feeling in the country. The fear of Roman Catholicism was partly due to the revival of Irish Catholic radicalism in the 1820s but that was not the only cause. Lurking in the 'No Popery' consciousness were vague historical memories of past Romish persecutions and these were reinforced by modern tales of continental catholicism.[2] The Evangelical revival with its rigid and distinctive theology gave a fresh impetus to English anti-catholicism:

> "Evangelicalism and the Catholic Question had begun to agitate the rustic mind with controversial debates. A Popish blacksmith had produced a strong Protestant reaction by declaring that, as soon as the Emancipation Bill was passed, he should do a great stroke of business in gridirons." [3]

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1 M.C.A. MSS. Allan Collection. Seven pages of notes advising the electorate concerning the 1826 election. Presumably this was a MS. draft of a printed circular.

2 See S. Gilley, "Protestant London, No-Popery and the Irish Poor 1830-1860", Recusant History, Vol. 10 (1970), pp. 210-221. Also G.F.A.Best, "The Protestant Constitution and its Supporters, 1800-1829", Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, Vol.13(Oct.1958),pp.105-127.

3 George Eliot, The Sad Fortunes of the Rev. Amos Barton in Scenes of Clerical Life. See also J. Morley, The Life of William Ewart Gladstone, Vol. 1, pp.53-54, for the same kind of reaction.

George Eliot's facetious remark about the Inquisition indicates that, in the setting of a local community, anti-catholicism had a strong thread of irrationality. Objections were not so much based on an understanding of Catholic teaching as "in general notions of the sort of people Catholics are and the sort of demands Catholicism makes."[4] It is notoriously difficult to guide this type of instinctive prejudice along a coherent political pathway. It was easier to raise the 'No-Popery' cry than to channel the resultant feeling into a particular political objective. This was the problem facing the Protestant constitutionists in the election of 1826. The difficulty was complicated because the Catholic Question was not the only electoral issue. The Corn Laws, parliamentary reform, the abolition of slavery and the current economic situation were all important factors.

While it was a decided disadvantage to be a pro-catholic candidate, the results were slightly disappointing for the ultra-Protestants. J.H. Hexter concluded that the election hardly indicated "a serious division of sentiment between parliament and the nation",[5] and Machin calculated that the net anti-catholic gain was only thirteen seats.[6] Anti-catholic feeling was too passive and inchoate to have a decisive effect on the election results.[7] Peel had noticed a year earlier that "People are tired of it [Catholic Question] and tired of the trouble of opposing it, or thinking about it."[8] The failure to return a House

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4 R. Moore, Pitmen Preachers and Politics, (the effects of Methodism in a Durham mining community). p.129.

5 J.H. Hexter, "The Protestant Revival and the Catholic Question in England, 1778-1829", Journal of Modern History, Vol.8 (1936),pp.297-319.

6 G.I.T. Machin, The Catholic Question in English Politics 1820 to 1830, Appendix, p.195.

7 Machin offers some explanations, p.87.

8 Quoted by N. Gash, Mr Secretary Peel. p.413.

firmly opposed to catholic claims was a setback to the ultra-protestants, and it was to cost them dearly when pressures began to build up in the next three years. In Allan's words it was "incredible that you should be unfavourable to Popery who send Members to support it."

However the situation did not seem hopeless. In 1827 Burdett's resolution was defeated by four votes; the first time since 1819 that a pro-catholic motion had failed to pass the Commons.[9] Canning's death in August, after a brief term as premier, was another boost to the anti-catholic cause. The really ominous signs were from Ireland, where the Catholic Association had revived in spite of Goulburn's Bill. It had gained some pro-catholic successes in the Irish elections of 1826, when there were morale boosting victories in the counties of Waterford, Monaghan and Louth, and these were but a foretaste of the most significant of all, O'Connell's return for Clare in July, 1828. O'Connell received immense support from the forty-shilling freeholders, and it became obvious to those with political perception that Catholic Emancipation could not be delayed for much longer. The response of the ultra-protestants to these increasing pressures came primarily in the formation of Brunswick Constitutional Clubs. By the end of 1828, "they numbered 148 in the towns and 26 in the counties of Ireland and about 40 in England."[10] The Brunswickers rivalled the Catholic Association "both in violence and in rent",[11] and revealed yet again that familiar circle in Irish Politics of pressure leading to reaction, leading to pressure.

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9 Machin, op.cit., p.91.

10 J.A. Reynolds, The Catholic Emancipation Crisis in Ireland, 1823-1829, p.151.

11 Quoted by Machin, op.cit., p.133.

The response of the Irish Wesleyans in this tense situation had two aspects. The official policy of the Conference as expressed in its Annual Addresses to the Methodist societies was to "Meddle not with politics, have nothing to do with party contests",[12] and again, "Sparingly enter into political conversations, but be always ready to shew that you fear God and honour the King."[13] The correspondence between the Irish and English Conferences confirms this impression that Wesleyans abstained from active politics. The Annual Address of the Irish Conference to its English counterpart states that:

> "The political contenders during the past year, the violence of false zeal on the one hand, and of intolerant superstition on the other have had their effects in various forms... However we feel thankful that in the name of the Lord Jesus, our people in general, did withdraw themselves from those who walked disorderly, and not after the teaching of Christ." [14]

However, on the more personal and private level, it is clear that Methodist non-involvement in politics was more apparent than real. Late in 1828, Matthew Tobias, Chairman of the Limerick circuit, informed Bunting that "it is my fixed opinion that the Methodist preachers should take no public part in political discussions. I am sorry to say that some of the Preachers have acted differently, and earnestly wish that you should address a Circular to each of the Superintendants recommending abstinence..."[15] Tobias later made it explicit that several

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12 The Annual Address of the Conference to the Members of the Wesleyan Societies in Ireland, July, 1828.

13 Ibid., July, 1829.

14 The Annual Address of the Irish Conference to the English Conference. Cork, 14 July 1829. Perhaps the moderation of language in this address owes itself to the fact that Bunting was President of the Conference. He would certainly have wanted to play down any Methodist political activity, because he was in favour of Catholic Emancipation and because of the 'No Politics' rule.

15 I.W.H.S. MSS. Matthew Tobias to Jabez Bunting, 28 Nov. 1828.

Methodist preachers had spoken at Brunswick Clubs. He realised that extreme Wesleyan opposition to Catholic Emancipation would hinder the missionary impact:

> "We have great difficulty at present in our attempts to do good to the Roman Catholics - making speeches at Brunswick Clubs will increase that difficulty a thousand fold." [16]

Tobias was correct, but the anti-catholicism of the Irish Wesleyans had already antagonised Catholic leaders, both clerical[17] and lay.[18]

Tobias put Bunting in a difficult position. The English Wesleyan realised that Methodist participation in Brunswick Clubs would damage "the permanent interests, character and usefulness, of our Connexion."[19] However, he felt unable to take any positive action. It was well-known that he was in favour of a measure of concession, and he did not relish the idea of interfering with the Irish preachers, "who I believe are generally very hot anti-concessionists." Bunting was also unwilling to give his enemies in the English Conference any basis for a possible attack, and after the Leeds Organ case of 1828 he most certainly had enemies.[20]

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16 Ibid.

17 See J.K.L., Letters on the State of Ireland to a Friend in England, Letter 3, p.67.

18 J.H. Hexter, op.cit., p.314. He quotes from Daniel O'Connell and R.L.Sheil.

19 Jabez Bunting to Matthew Tobias, 23 Feb. 1829. In W.R. Ward, The Early Correspondence of Jabez Bunting, pp.202-203.

20 See B. Gregory, D.D., Sidelights on the Conflicts of Methodism, during the Second Quarter of the Nineteenth Century (1898), pp.48-99. Also, J.T. Hughes, "The Story of the Leeds 'Non-Cons'. The Reasons for the Dispute." Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society, Vol. 35. (Dec. 1965), pp.81 ff., and Vol. 37 (June, 1970).

Tobias replied to Bunting's letter on St. Patrick's Day, 1829, "the day in which our Irish affairs are to be debated in the Imperial Parliament."[21] From his window he looked out upon the County of Clare, in which O'Connell had won the election less than a year before:

> "Our county Societies are composed exclusively of Palatines, the descendants of men driven from Germany on account of their Religion, they do not amalgamate with the native Irish and are all Brunswickers; and the Brunswick Star; a most inflammatory paper is sent by the Brunswick Clubs to every society in the circuit so that our people are kept in a perpetual political fever." [22]

Under these circumstances the Methodists obviously acquired a strong anti-catholic reputation. Tobias relates that on one occasion people refused to come to hear him preach because it was rumoured that he had signed a pro-catholic petition. In fact the rumour was not entirely without foundation, since he was probably the only Methodist preacher in Ireland who was in favour of Catholic Emancipation.[23]

Gideon Ouseley was more representative of the views of the Irish preachers. Ouseley was something of a hero in British Methodism. He was among the first of the gaelic speaking missionaries, and his prodigious travellings in Ireland were enthusiastically applauded by the English Connexion. Bunting and Richard Watson were so impressed with him at the Belfast Conference of 1827 that they invited him to address the anniversary gathering of the Missionary Society.[24] During

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21 I.W.H.S. MSS. Matthew Tobias to Jabez Bunting, 17 Mar. 1829.

22 Ibid., The Palatines were German Protestant refugees from the Palatinate in the Rhine Valley. In 1709 between 500 and 1,000 of them were settled by action of the British Government, near Rathkeale in County Limerick. See Encyclopedia of World Methodism, entry by F. Jeffery.

23 M.M.H. MSS. Thomas Edwards to George Morley, 24 Feb. 1829.

24 Rev. W. Arthur, The Life of Gideon Ouseley (London, 1786). p.240.

a visit to York, Leeds and Bradford, Ouseley stated that "The Protestants of this side of the water are filled with apathy about Popery, as if the case were hopeless, or not worthy of notice."[25] Certainly Ouseley could not have been accused of apathy. He was firmly opposed to emancipation, but he was in favour of the 'wings' introduced with Burdett's Bill in 1825; the payment of the priesthood and a modification of the franchise. To put it simply, he wanted to buy Catholic loyalty with government money and exclude as many Catholics as possible from the vote. Ouseley wrote pamphlets to Catholic leaders,[26] contributed letters to the Irish press,[27] and even wrote to Peel and Wellington.[28] Later, he gave his ultra-protestantism full scope by joining the Orange Order.[29]

Notwithstanding the official Conference addresses and the influence of Bunting and Tobias, it was well known in Ireland that the Methodists were firmly opposed to the Catholic claims. A letter to R.J. Tennent, the Belfast M.P., complained that Ireland, "so far from progressing in

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25 Ibid., p.241.

26 See Gideon Ouseley, Letters to Dr. Doyle on the Doctrines of his Church with an easy and effectual Plan to obtain Immediate Emancipation (Dublin, 1824). And,
Letters in Defence of the Roman Catholics of Ireland in which is opened The Real Source of their many Injuries, and of Ireland's Sorrows; Addressed to D. O'Connell, Esq., and Company (London, 1829).

27 Sligo Journal, 21 May 1823. A Letter entitled The Tranquility of Ireland, written May 16.

28 C.H. Crookshank, History of Methodism in Ireland. iii. p. 128.

29 His original charter exists in the I.W.H.S. archives in the N.I.P.R.O.

liberality is sinking deeper in gloomy bigotry, and I confess I do not know whether the bigotry of Catholics or Methodists is most disagreeable."[30]

As in the time of Butterworth, the anti-catholicism of the Irish Methodists was influencing their English brethren. One of the principal avenues of this influence was the correspondence filtering through the Missionary Society in London. George Morley, Secretary of the society from 1827 to 1829, sought the opinion of Thomas Edwards, the officially appointed agent for the Irish schools. Edwards, like Tobias, was in favour of concession but realised that he saw the "subject differently from nearly the whole of our Irish brethren."[31] In a letter full of moderation and good sense he stated that the Government should settle the matter quickly and with unanimity. He realised that a fully amicable settlement was impossible, since both sides were unwilling to compromise, but if the Government acted firmly by "rigidly enforcing the laws" then a relative tranquility might ensue. Edwards' opinions were reasonable but not representative, as the metropolitan missionary committee knew very well.

Other influential English Wesleyans used independent means to gain information. Joseph Entwistle, twice president of the English Conference made enquiries from the Rev. William Stewart, Chairman of the

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30 John G. Montgomery to R.J. Tennent, 31 May 1828. Tennent Collection, N.I.P.R.O. D.1748.

31 M.M.H. MSS. Thomas Edwards to George Morley, 24 Feb. 1829. Also, Thomas Edwards to the Mission Secretaries, 7 Jan. 1828. Thomas Edwards to the Mission Secretaries, 13 Jan. 1829. William Cornwall to George Morley, 3 Feb. 1829.

Dublin Circuit. Stewart became a well known figure in English Wesleyanism, having represented the Irish Connexion eighteen times between 1825 and 1848. Entwistle would have had a working knowledge of Irish affairs as he chaired the Conference in Dublin in 1826. He asked Stewart to answer five direct questions:

" 1st. Is it probable that the proposed measure will satisfy the catholics generally without further concessions, and religious advantages of a pecuniary nature?"

" 2nd. Is it likely that the Protestant + Catholic population will live together in greater quiet than they have done?"

" 3rd. Are the Jesuits numerous, and are they as dangerous as they generally are supposed to be?"

" 4th Will Messrs. O'Connell + Co. be quiet or will they still keep in a state of agitation the public mind, at least among Catholics?"

" 5th What influences will these changes have on Methodism in Ireland? On Bible Societies? - On Protestant Schools?" 32

These questions were in the mind of any educated English Wesleyan with a real desire for the conversion of Ireland. Stewart's answers very cogently express Irish protestant fears on the eve of emancipation, and are therefore worthy of analysis. In answer to the first question, Stewart correctly speculated that the Catholics would receive emancipation, not as a favour but as a right and that they would soon divert their attention to the Established Church and its system of tithes and rates. He was also worried that the Catholics might overthrow the Cromwellian and Williamite land confiscations. Basically Stewart saw Catholic Emancipation as the first breach of the protestant ascendancy in property and in church. His fears were genuine, since he could not

32 I.W.H.S. MSS. William Stewart to Joseph Entwistle, 24 Mar. 1829. This letter is reproduced in the Memoir of Joseph Entwistle by his son, pp.437-440.

see how the "Roman Catholics of Ireland can consistently with the principles of their Faith, common character of human beings in general - 'be satisfied' with any thing short of a full restoration of property + the re-establishment of their Religion in this country."[33]

This reply indicates the length of historical memory in the Irish political mind.

In answer to the second question, Stewart was convinced that relations between Protestants and Catholics would not be improved; in fact he thought that they would deteriorate, due to increased political competition. He was certain that Protestant emigration would increase as a result, which disturbed the Methodists greatly; how could Ireland be converted except through the missionary labours of the Protestants living there? Stewart repeated the traditional fear of the Jesuits, but he was closer to the mark in his next answer. He did not think that O'Connell would be satisfied with emancipation, an opinion which was vindicated when O'Connell re-directed his political agitation to the campaign for the repeal of the Union. Stewart's tone implies quite rightly, that the Catholics of Ireland could not be pacified by legislative favours from the British Government when their list of grievances was so long and uncompromising. Irish Catholic nationalism was as rigid and unyielding as the system it opposed.

Stewart's letter ends with the observation that the real grievances of the Irish peasantry lay elsewhere than in political emancipation; perhaps a more accurate conclusion than the leaders of the Catholic Association were prepared to draw. The letter, in total, was one of

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33 Ibid.

sound reasoning and informed speculation. Renewed Catholic demands in the 1830s and 1840s reveal that, whatever else Catholic Emancipation was, it was not the major solution of the Irish problem for which politicians hoped. The fears expressed in the letter were rational, and for Stewart at least, Methodist anti-catholicism was not simply intolerance and bigotry.[34] Stewart deliberately avoided any kind of political involvement, a position which his brethren did not fully share.

Methodist political participation in the campaign against Catholic Emancipation, was not purely an Irish phenomenon; there was an English strand as well. In fact the opposition in England followed roughly the same kind of pattern as in Ireland. There was the same official silence, while underneath there was a whole range of political activity. The first and most famous of the ultra-protestant monster meetings was held on 24 October on Penenden Heath. Sheil's account of this meeting states that "not only the priests of the established religion, but many of the dissenting preachers of the Methodist school, were arrayed under the Winchilsea banners."[35] Sheil's caustic description of the behaviour of the Methodist preachers at the meeting reveals his intense dislike of them.

There were, of course, localised controversies of a religious cum political nature between Methodist preachers and Roman Catholic clergy.[36]

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34 G.F.A. Best has shown that the Protestant Constitutionists in England had a reasonable basis for their views.

35 M.W. Savage ed., Sketches, Legal and Political by The Late Right Honourable Richard Lalor Sheil ii. pp.202-203.

36 See for example, J.B. Holroyd, Remarks and Illustrations on a letter from the Rev. J.L., Roman Catholic Priest at Scarborough to a member of the Methodist Society in that town (1827). And again, J.B. Holroyd, A Reply to Methodism Unmasked, by the Rev. J.L., Roman Catholic Priest at Scarborough; In which the Abominations of the Church of Rome are further exposed (1828). /Continued over...

In these disputes the Methodists usually began by showing catholics to be in doctrinal error and then moved on to raise doubts about catholic loyalty and right to toleration. In return, the Roman Catholics treated the Church of England as a deviation from the truth, but the Methodists as complete heretics. At a time of political pressure, these disputes had political connotations.

In the early months of 1829, Wesleyan preachers were frequently engaged in speaking at public meetings in the provinces. In a debate in the Lords on the 18 March, Eldon stated that "having had multitudes of provincial papers transmitted to him, containing reports of the debates which had taken place at numerous meetings in the country, for the purpose of petitioning parliament against further concessions to the Catholics, he had been astonished to observe the ability and knowledge manifested by the ministers of the Wesleyan Methodists who had taken part in those debates."[37]

One such speech, which can stand for all, was made by the Rev. George Cubitt at Sheffield on 18 February, 1829.[38] Cubitt was not ashamed to declare himself a Wesleyan,[39] even though he was speaking on a political platform. His arguments were familiar. Roman Catholics effectively exclude themselves from the exercise of legislative power because of the "essential intolerance" of their Church. The principal argument would have pleased Eldon; it was in fact the theory of the Protestant Constitution:

This was primarily a doctrinal dispute yet Holroyd could write: "Let these disabilities be removed, and you must be prepared, not only to give up your Bible, but every other book on religion, written by a Protestant."

37 Hansard N.S. xx. 1313.

38 Rev. George Cubitt (Wesleyan Minister), A Speech delivered in the town hall Sheffield on Wednesday, February 18, 1829 at a public meeting convened to Petition the Legislature against the admission of Roman Catholics to Legislative and Political Power (Bristol, 1829).

39 Ibid., p.7.

> "If one part of the Legislature must be Protestant, the whole ought to be Protestant. If one branch may be altered, the whole ought to partake of the alteration." [40]

At the end of his speech, the Wesleyan minister characteristically tried to disclaim political affiliations:

> "What I have said, I have not said as a party man; I belong to no political party. I gladly, on all ordinary occasions, let politics alone." [41]

It was the traditional Wesleyan misunderstanding. The speaker was not a member of a political party but that did not make the speech non-political. In fact, the arguments were those of the High Church Tories, the Eldonian Constitutionists, and the Brunswickers. One can easily draw this line from Wesley through Butterworth and Allan, to Cubitt and many others like him. The Wesleyan conservatives were closer to the ultra-Tory party than they would dare admit.

There are, however two perplexing facts. Though avidly opposed to Catholic Emancipation (except for a few notable figures), the Wesleyans did not organise an official and effective opposition, and are conspicuous by their absence from the widespread anti-catholic petitioning. In 1828, there was only one anti-catholic petition from a Methodist society,[42] while in 1829 there were only seven.[43]

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40 Ibid., p.12.

41 Ibid., p.16.

42 This was from the Wesleyan Methodists at Brixham. Journal of the House of Commons, lxxxiii. (1828).

43 These were:
Methodist congregation of Derryanville.)
Methodists at Portadown.) Ireland.
Methodist Society of Scotch-street Armagh.)
Protestant Dissenters and Wesleyans of Buckingham)
Baptists and Wesleyan Methodists of Maidstone)
Wesleyan Methodists of Marlborough) England
Wesleyan Methodists of Wellingborough)
Journal of the House of Commons, lxxxiv. (1829).

The first point has exercised the minds of a number of historians. Halevy was the first to offer an explanation:

> "In 1829 Conference had not had the opportunity of making any official pronouncement on the question of Catholic Emancipation. For the bill had been rushed through Parliament in the interval between two annual Conferences. But it was common knowledge that the majority of Wesleyans were opposed to Emancipation." [44]

Kent[45] has shown that this analysis is unsatisfactory for three reasons. The Government had no real cause to fear a conflict with the Wesleyan Conference. The Government took action without the full support of the Established Church, and did not fear the opposition of a 'dissenting' body. The pressures from Ireland were too strong for the Government to lay aside its plans to suit the Methodists. Secondly, the Wesleyans did not use the Conference for political purposes. Since 1803 they had at their disposal a smaller and more discreet body for political action, the Committee of Privileges. This committee based in London could be convened quickly should the need arise. Thirdly, Kent discovered that the Committee of Privileges did meet to discuss Catholic Emancipation. His material comes from two main sources. A Memoir of the Reverend Joseph Entwistle, by his son and Recollections of my own Life and Times, by Thomas Jackson. Jackson states that Adam Clarke joined with several other ministers and laymen to convene a meeting of the Committee of Privileges in mid-March 1829. Apparently Bunting was not told of this meeting, perhaps because his views were well known. Kent accepts Thomas Jackson's account of what happened at

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44 E. Halevy, The Triumph of Reform 1830-41. Vol. 3 in a History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century, Revised Edition, p.153.

45 J. Kent, "M. Elie Halevy on Methodism", Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society, Vol. 29 part 4 (Dec. 1953), and Vol. 34, part 8 (Dec. 1964). also,
J. Kent. The Age of Disunity, pp.86-92.

the meeting:

> "Dr. Bunting, who was then stationed in Manchester, received intelligence of this meeting, and in the midst of its deliberations, unexpectedly appeared, asking for what purpose the Committee had been called together. On being informed, he said that the Committee had no authority to meet for any such purpose; and that, if it should pass any resolution in opposition to the Catholic claims, or propose to send any petition to Parliament against the Bill which was then pending, he would inform the Government that the Committee was acting without authority, and would enter his protest against its proceedings in the public papers." [46]

According to Jackson, the result was that the meeting broke up because the Committee members were unwilling to risk a public dispute with the President of Conference. Those Methodists who were on principle opposed to the measure could put their names to petitions drawn up by other denominations.

Kent concluded that this evidence was satisfactory because Jackson "normally acted in concert with Jabez Bunting" and therefore, "There can be no doubt... that Bunting prevented action against the Government virtually single-handed in 1829."[47] W.R. Ward has agreed that "the Committee was overruled by the determined minority of one... the President, Jabez Bunting."[48]

This explanation is attractive, and fits the character of Bunting drawn by historians, but it is not fully satisfactory on a number of accounts. If Bunting prevented Methodist action "virtually single-handed", then why did the Wesleyans not 'come out' officially at some other stage between 1800 and 1829, when Bunting was not so influential, nor Methodist President? The Methodists were not late starters in the

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46 T. Jackson, Recollections of my own Life and Times (1873). p.407.

47 J. Kent, The Age of Disunity, p.92.

48 W.R. Ward, Religion and Society in England, 1790-1850, p.119.

campaign against Catholic Emancipation. There were many other occasions when it seemed as if concessions were likely to be carried. Nor does Kent's explanation make clear why there was so little Methodist petitioning, even before the Committee of Privileges' resolution in March, 1829.[49] If the Methodists were such hot anti-concessionists as the evidence implies, one would have expected numerous local petitions. It also seems unwise to place so much emphasis on the unsupported testimony of Thomas Jackson since it is patently obvious from his Recollections, and a subsequent pamphlet by Samuel Dunn,[50] that his relations with Bunting were not as harmonious as Kent suggests. Dunn's pamphlet is particularly interesting because he suffered at the hands of both Jackson and Bunting at the 1849 Conference.[51] He was also strongly anti-catholic,[52] so he would have had little sympathy with Bunting's position in 1829. Dunn points out that Jackson in his Recollections records several exchanges with Bunting. Jackson complained that Bunting broke a written pledge by failing to contribute to the Magazine when Jackson was editor.[53]

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49 This Resolution will be discussed later.

50 S. Dunn, Recollections of Thomas Jackson and his Acts (London, 1873).

51 Dunn, along with James Everett and William Griffith, was suspected of writing the infamous Fly Sheets, and he was expelled from the connexion.

52 See S. Dunn, An Exposure of the Mummeries, Absurdities and Idolatries of Popery. This was written by Dunn when he was stationed in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne and is a response to the growth of Roman Catholicism in that area.

53 T. Jackson, op.cit., p.215.

They also came into conflict over the publication of Wesley's works. Bunting insisted on modifying the grammar and phraseology while Jackson later "cancelled every one" of these "emendations."[54] The most serious disagreement occurred at the Conference of 1832 over the proposed scheme for National Education in Ireland,[55] which will be discussed in the next chapter. In 1837 Dunn claimed that he received a letter from Bunting, then President of the Conference and Senior Missionary Secretary:

> "We are annoyed by the doings of Jackson, the editor: he is so pugnacious that he strikes at every one that he thinks is crossing his path, and makes enemies of those who would otherwise be friends." [56]

Dunn's evidence is certainly not conclusive, since he bore a lasting hatred of Jackson, but it does suggest doubts about Jackson's account of the events in March, 1829.

Another reason for doubting Jackson's account and therefore Kent's interpretation, is that it does not fit some new evidence from the Allan Collection in the Methodist Church Archives. For present purposes it is best to reconstruct exactly what happened between the King's speech on Feb. 5, when it became public knowledge that ministers were ready to bring forward Catholic Emancipation, and the meeting of the Methodist Committee of Privileges in mid-March. This task is rendered unfortunately difficult because the manuscript minutes of the Committee of Privileges for this period have been lost.[57]

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54 Ibid., p.222.

55 See Gregory, op.cit., pp.116-124.

56 Quoted in Dunn, Recollections of Thomas Jackson and his Acts, p.5.

57 M.C.A. MSS. Minutes of the Committee of Privileges exist between 1803 and 1822, and from 1835 to 1845, but the intervening years are missing.

By February 1829 it was quite widely known that Bunting was in favour of a measure of concession to the Catholics. He had made his opinions public at a meeting in Manchester,[58] much to the distaste of his Methodist brethren. A dissenting minister speaking in Belfast[59] was able to inform his audience that Bunting was in favour of Emancipation, so it must have been no secret. However, his position was not sufficiently known to prevent many requests that he authorize Methodist petitioning. One such request came from John Aikenhead, Superintendent of the Devonport Circuit from 1826 to 1829.[60] Aikenhead had been approached by "some friends warm in the Protestant cause to send petitions to both houses of Parliament from this Circuit against the granting of power to Roman Catholics."[61] The Devonport Superintendent was writing for advice and there are two points which stand out in the letter. He obviously did not know that Bunting was in favour of Emancipation, and he lists four alternative courses of action; 1 "Petitioning the legislature on the subject as a body"; 2 "do it rather by circuits"; 3 "only in conjunction with others" and "be altogether silent on the subject." He was unwilling to take positive action without the presidential sanction because he knew that this issue verged on the political and that the Methodists had always had a strict 'No Politics' rule.

It was not only Wesleyans who wanted the President's authorisation. All groups opposed to Emancipation saw the Methodists as potential allies. Bunting was approached by the Brunswick Constitutional Club of Ireland

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58 T.P. Bunting, The Life of Jabez Bunting. ii. p.215.

59 I.W.H.S. MSS. Matthew Tobias to Jabez Bunting, 17 Mar. 1829.

60 John Aikenhead to Jabez Bunting, postmarked 21 Feb. 1829. In Ward, The Early Correspondence. pp.201-202.

61 Ibid.

who were "Aware that the members of the Wesleyan Methodist connexion have ever avowed themselves the firm and staunch friends of the principles of the Established Church, as well as the steady supporters of the House of Brunswick."[62] The Brunswickers wanted the Methodists to use the constitutional means prescribed in all cases of emergency, "vis. earnest and respectful remonstrances, in the form of Petitions, to the Throne and the Parliament." Bunting gives his response to these pressures in a letter to Tobias in late February:

> "Private and public appeals are made to me, as the President, to originate or countenance such petitions which of course I must refuse to do. I am sure incalculable mischief would result from it. We as a body never have petitioned separately; nor should we now, on a question so decidedly political in its aspect." [63]

Bunting's position was clear. He wanted a Catholic Emancipation Act; he had enough political astuteness to know that it would be carried in any case and he did not want the Methodists "as a body" to become involved in a question "so decidedly political." Bunting had the full weight of Wesleyan tradition on his side, and he was right; the Methodists never had "as a body" taken part in political matters. The opposition to Lord Sidmouth's Bill was a different case since that was a direct attack on Methodist religious liberties. The majority of Wesleyans did not see the distinction so clearly, because for them Catholic Emancipation was primarily a religious issue.

The scanty surviving evidence shows that after many years of scares the Government's new determination had a profound affect on the Methodists. Particularly galling was the fact that the ministers had arrived at their

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62 M.C.A. A two page printed circular to the Ministers of the Wesleyan Connexion signed by T.P. Magee, Charles Boyton, and Hugh Eccles. Postmarked 8 Mar. 1829.

63 Jabez Bunting to Matthew Tobias, 23 Feb. 1829, in Ward, op.cit., pp.202-203.

decision because of pressure from O'Connell and the Catholic Association. Richard Treffry jun. wrote that he had never previously been much interested in politics "till this last horrible abominable never-to-be sufficiently execrated proposed measure was announced last Thursday evening."[64] He considered that "the Duke of Wellington's ministry has been frightened by the threats of bawling Irish demagogues." Similarly, Daniel Isaac, Chairman of the Hull Circuit, who had been formerly favourable to Catholic claims was 'converted' by "The conduct of the Priests, and of the Association, in Ireland."[65] Adam Clarke, who was stationed in London, wrote that the present ministry "are betraying the King, the country, and the church, by delivering them into the hands of the Papists."[66] After a perusal of Peel's speech in the House, William Vevers was moved to write his Observations on the Members of the Church of Rome giving security to a Protestant State.[67]

Preachers from such diverse parts as London, York, Scarborough, Sheffield, Bristol, Devonport and Ireland were roused by the events of February and March 1829. In such an atmosphere, it was inevitable that some should want to convene a meeting of the Committee of Privileges to plan the Methodist strategy. Vevers wrote to Bunting that "It has been to me, and I believe to others, a subject of surprise, and regret, that our Committee of Privileges has hitherto been, as far as I can learn, inactive at this important crisis."[68]

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64 M.C.A. MSS. Richard Treffry jun. to George Osborne, 11 Feb. 1829.

65 Quoted in Kent, op.cit., p.90.

66 Memoir of the Rev. Joseph Entwistle by his Son (Bristol, 1848). Entry under 7 Mar. 1829. p.436.

67 Vevers was stationed at York. The Pamphlet was published in Leeds, 1829.

68 William Vevers to Jabez Bunting, 16 Mar. 1829. Ward, op.cit., pp.204-206. In fact the Committee of Privileges had met on March 11, to discuss Catholic Emancipation. Vevers obviously had not received news of the resolution at the time of writing.

In fact, the Committee of Privileges had not been inactive. Its first meeting of the new parliamentary session was held in City Road Chapel on February 13. The meeting was convened at the instigation of Thomas Allan because he feared "that the Bill before Parliament for the Suppression of the Catholic Association might probably in some way or other [affect our]? Societies in Ireland."[69]

The Bill was introduced by Peel and given its first reading on February 10.[70] Allan had certainly lost no time in taking action. It was ironical yet again that the Methodists should have been affected by a measure designed to suppress an Association which they loathed. The Committee of Privileges sent a deputation to Peel to try to get a clause inserted "which should effectually guard our Societies in Ireland from any injurious operation of the Bill." The Home Secretary assured them "that it was not in the most distant intention of the framers of the Bill to effect or put any restraint whatever upon the Methodist Societies in Ireland."[71] Peel was obviously unwilling to change the Bill lest its effectiveness be reduced. Goulburn's Bill was a painful reminder of the elasticity of the Catholic lawyers. Nevertheless, the Methodists were satisfied with Peel's assurances and they let the matter drop. The Committee met again within four weeks, this time to discuss possible action in response to proposals for Catholic Emancipation.

It appears that Allan was once again behind the convening of the Committee, probably with strong support from Adam Clarke, who was living in London. Two letters written by Thomas Allan to his son, one before and one after the meeting of the Committee, are crucial to a

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69 M.C.A. MSS. John Mason to Jabez Bunting, 14 Feb. 1829.

70 Hansard, N.S. xx.242.

71 M.C.A. MSS. Mason to Bunting, op.cit.

proper understanding of what took place. On March 9 he wrote:

> "From a note I received from Lord Farnham I called and had a long chat with him and Lady F who are exceedingly anxious that the Methodists should appear. It was impossible for me to make any promises till it shall be gravely considered for which purpose we are to have a meeting of the Committee of Privileges on Wednesday next. I feel it a very difficult question how to advise the Methodists to proceed as a Body. However I hope we shall be directed for the best. I have also had some conversation with my old friend glorious John Lord E who received me very kindly. I wanted to know whether a Peer could demand an audience of His M and present a petition. He will inform me." 72

Allan was keeping company with Eldon and Farnham, but it is also significant that he was uncertain about the best course of action for the Methodists "as a Body." The Methodist solicitor had always been to the forefront of Wesleyan anti-catholicism, but he had never implicated the denomination as a whole. The meeting of the Committee of Privileges took place on March 11 and Jackson's account of it has already been given. Allan wrote a slightly different account:

> "On the 11th inst the Committee of Privileges met but on considering the Bill it did not appear to me to affect the Methodists more than other protestants and therefore as a Body it would hardly be proper for them to move, especially as there might be some who would object. Indeed I have always thought that they should not act as a Body unless they were likely to suffer as such. We therefore unanimously resolved that 'with respect to the Bill for the Relief of His Majesty's Rom Cath subjects now before the House of Commons the Committee of Privileges do not think it their duty to take any proceedings in their collective capacity; but every Member of the Methodist Societies will of course pursue such steps in his individual capacity on this occasion as he may conscientiously think right.' At our meeting I did not observe one person present in favour of the Cath claims but Dr. Bunting. The letters received were without variation against them and I have no doubt that the Methodists generally throughout the country are aiding in the general exertions." 73

Allan's account does not mention Bunting's outrageous entry although

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72 M.C.A. MSS. Allan Collection. Thomas Allan to his son Thomas, 9 Mar. 1829.

73 M.C.A. MSS. Allan collection. Thomas Allan to his son Thomas, 19 Mar. 1829.

he does single out the President as the only person in favour of Emancipation. This account has not the same tone of pique as Jackson's. Indeed Allan agreed with the decision, which was unanimous. When John Mason, who was secretary to the Committee, sent a copy of the resolution to Entwistle, he added that it was "A wise conclusion in my opinion, for as a religious body, I trust the Methodists will never move collectively on any civil or political question."[74]

Entwistle was strongly anti-catholic, but seems also to have agreed with this decision. When the Secretary of the Brunswick Club in Dublin requested that his Methodists petition against emancipation, he refused to initiate a Wesleyan petition in Bristol, even though he had signed other petitions. He doubted "the propriety of the Methodists, as such, embarking in political matters."[75]

It is difficult to reconcile the conflicting evidence from Jackson and the others but one can make a reasonable attempt. The meeting of the Committee of Privileges was probably convened at short notice, as was the meeting on February 13. Bunting was not at the first meeting, in fact it seems that he did not know about it until Mason sent a copy of the minutes the day after. With political events moving quickly the Committee could not afford the time to communicate with Manchester for Presidential approval. After all, the Committee was formed because of the need for swift action, and that is why it was based in London. There is no way of knowing whether Bunting was informed officially of the meeting of March 11, or whether he found out from some other source. In either case there is no evidence for Kent's assertion that the

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74 M.C.A. MSS Journal. Entry for Sat. 14 Mar.

75 Entwistle, op.cit., p.437.

Committee's anti-catholic resolution was weakened because it was "caught in the rather childish act of solemnly holding a meeting behind their President's back."[76] It was reasonable for Bunting to be late since he was travelling from Manchester and it was also reasonable that he should put his views firmly because he was the President. Bunting's arguments were strong, not because of his threats or the weakness of a 'caught out' committee, but because they were demonstrably right. Catholic Emancipation was a political issue. The Wesleyan Methodists were a religious connexion. To commit the connexion to a political campaign was to betray the principles of its Founder. In all the years that the Catholic question was agitated the Methodists had never committed themselves "as a body" to opposition. Bunting had tradition on his side. To old campaigners like Allan, the Committee's decision was perfectly reasonable. Even before it met he was uncertain about the advice he should give. Only Jackson, of those who have left evidence of that meeting, felt a sense of grievance:

> "That Dr. Bunting had a right to his opinion on this occasion, no one will deny; but that he had a right to control the action of his brethren in the manner now stated, I for one was never convinced."[77]

It is difficult to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion to this problem. Bunting did not prevent Methodist commitment "virtually single-handed." The most that can be said is that Bunting used his influence and position as President, to support an idea which Wesleyans had always held, but which they came close to rejecting in the stormy politics of March 1829. To hold that Bunting single handedly prevented Methodist action does not take into account other factors, and does not explain either why the Methodists did not act as a body between 1800 and

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76 Kent, op.cit., p.92.

77 Jackson, op.cit., p.408.

1828, or the conspicuous absence of Wesleyan petitions. On the other side, it must be said that the pressures both from within and without on the Wesleyans to act as a body, had never been as great as in 1829. From that point of view, Bunting's intervention to bulwark the traditional position was timely as it was effective. The decision was accepted by those who understood the Methodist political standpoint. Jackson was annoyed, but then he was frequently annoyed with Bunting in spite of their friendship and similarities in connexional politics.

Methodist petitioning can be explained in the same way. In the Annual Addresses to the Societies, the Conference frequently pointed out the need to refrain from political activity. For the Methodists in the first quarter of the century, it was an accepted fact that one did not petition Parliament as a separate group on a political matter. This did not, of course, mean that individual Methodists could not add their names to petitions initiated by other groups, as Butterworth and Allan had done in the parish of St. Dunstan's-in-the-West. Many Methodists signed petitions originally drafted by members of the Established Church, Dissenters or simply protestants. This was recognised by some in Parliament, like William Smith, the member for Norwich, in the petitioning of 1825:

> "There were a great number of persons who belonged to the class of Methodists... who were sometimes confounded with the Protestant dissenters, but did not in reality belong to them." 78

There was a debate along these lines in the Lords on March 18, 1829. The Earl of Eldon presented four petitions from parishes in Newcastle-upon-tyne. Earl Grey stated that in the original petition drafted by

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78 Hansard, N.S. xiii. 9.

Newcastle clergymen there was, "a strong declaration against the Roman Catholic religion, and as strong a declaration to the government in church and state."[79] Grey alleged that this declaration was removed in order to effect an alliance with the numerically stronger Wesleyan Methodists of the area. The original words "church and state" were removed and replaced by the phrase "Protestant church." Grey stated that the junction of the clergy with the Methodists was not likely to promote the interests of the Established Church.

In this debate the Methodists were not without their defenders. The Earl of Mountcashell thought that the Established Church was labouring under severe abuses in any case,[80] and that

> "The Wesleyan Methodists were a most useful body of persons; and there could be no better soldiers to fight against the pope and his party. This had long been experienced in Ireland." [81]

There was a much more substantial reply by Eldon, who inquired if any one could tell "why the Wesleyan Methodists were not Protestants, and had not a right to join such addresses."[82] Eldon could not have argued in that fashion over any other issue than Catholic Emancipation. Apart from their opposition to the Catholic claims, the Protestant constitutionists had very little in common with the Wesleyan Methodists. However in difficult times, all alliances are possible.

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79 Hansard, N.S. xx. 1307.

80 See A Review by T. Ebrington, Bishop of Ferns of the correspondence between the Earl of Mountcashel and the Bishop of Ferns; together with the letters, and a report of Lord Mountcashel's speech at the meeting held in Cork on September 5, 1829. (Dublin, 1830).

81 Hansard N.S. xx. 1311.

82 Ibid., 1313.

Under these circumstances, the Methodists could use their position half-way between Church and Dissent to disguise their activity. This was useful for it enabled them to retain the "No Politics rule" in theory while neglecting it in practice. Their anti-catholicism was so overt that their "no politics" theory was believed by no-one but themselves. Yet it did stop them using their full political potentialities in a coherent way. The Methodists would never be a powerful, extra-parliamentary political, pressure group until the rule was dispensed with, as in the opposition to Sidmouth's Bill.

The Catholic Emancipation Bill passed with large majorities; the agitation from Ireland, O'Connell's election for Clare and the 'conversions' of Peel and Wellington ensured that. Machin states that "tolerant conviction played no part in the Government's purpose. On the other hand, intolerant conviction was not strong enough to defeat this purpose. The Ultras were helpless."[83] Popular anti-catholic prejudice was not effectively aroused. The Tory constitutionists were in no position to tap this prejudice, because of their inherent conservatism. But why was there no strong protest from the Anglican Evangelicals and the dissenters? Both groups had roots in the popular religious life of the nation, yet in both as among the Methodists, "the opposition to Emancipation died at the top."[84] The dissenters had achieved the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts in 1828, and were in no position to prevent the extension of relief to another religious group. At the last meeting of the United Committee, (appointed to conduct the Application to Parliament for the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts), it was resolved that "although the Committee had abstained in its own

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83 Machin, op.cit., p.178.

84 Hexter, op.cit.

application from coalition with other applicants it could not separate without expressing its desire for the abolition of all laws interfering with the rights of conscience and attacking civil disabilities to religious faith and worship."[85]

The Anglican Evangelicals presented a much less united front than has been sometimes assumed.[86] Of course, it is easy to find well-known Evangelicals who were strongly anti-catholic: Charles Simeon, Hannah More, Zachariah MaCauley and Granville Sharp. After 1826, with the growth of pre-millenial doctrines, anti-catholicism was strengthened in Anglican Evangelicalism through men like McNeile and Bickersteth.[87] Nevertheless the impressive feature about the votes of the Evangelical Parliamentarians is not their anti-catholicism, but their liberalism. In the Lords two Evangelical peers (Earl of Shaftesbury and Viscount Horton) were opposed to emancipation. In the Commons Buxton and Abel Smith were similarly opposed. With these exceptions "every Evangelical in Parliament voted for emancipation. Seven commoners, four peers-temporal, and (in the division of 1829) four peers- spiritual were on the Catholic side."[88]

In Parliament, the Opposition to emancipation was led primarily by the Church Tories, the Bishops and the Irish landowners. In the country the opposition was largely impotent because the leaders of the Church Evangelicals, Protestant Dissenters and Wesleyan Methodists, decided for one reason or another not to enter the fray. Cobbett and Hunt also used their influence among the working-classes to support emancipation.[89]

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85 B.L. Manning, The Protestant Dissenting Deputies, p.252.

86 See Hexter, op.cit., pp.306-307 for a brief critique of the views of Overton and Halevy.

87 See Iain Murray, The Puritan Hope, ch.ix.

88 Hexter, op.cit., p.307.

89 Both Cobbett and Hunt spoke at the Penenden Heath meeting in favour of Emancipation. Sheil, op.cit., pp.193-218.

These factors help explain the muted protest from the country when Emancipation was carried.

Even though the Methodists as a body had not opposed the Emancipation Bill its passage was still a bitter pill for them to swallow. Their reactions were extreme, revealing a sense of disappointment and betrayal. The biographer of Fossey Tackaberry, an Irish preacher stationed at Drogheda records that "A month after the measure became law, in answer to the enquiry, 'What do you think of the times?' he replied, manifestly under the influence of strong emotion: 'I scarcely know what to think, but this I believe, that on the 13th April, 1829, the King did what he could to emancipate every Protestant in the British dominions from his oath of allegiance... I think infidels and Romanists will unite against the Establishment.'[90]

In England, it was not only the passage of the Bill which was condemned, but also Peel's defection. Vevers attacked him strongly in his pamphlet of March, 1829,[91] but the Methodist sense of betrayal is best captured by Richard Treffry:

> "And here is Robert Peel - the staunch tory and anti-catholic whose judgement was so unerring whose integrity was so unquestionable who knew Popery well enough to declare that Papists could give no Security to a government who might be so liberal and silly as to trust them - Peel the chosen of the University of Oxford - whose very name was the rallying word for good true strong unaltering constitutional British feeling - he is convinced too that Emancipation must be granted - the apostate! " [92]

Only Bunting was unperturbed, because he believed that Peel was right. Nevertheless, the Methodist opposition to Emancipation was as widespread as it was resolute. It is symbolised by the fact that two

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90 R. Huston, The Life of the Rev. Fossey Tackaberry, pp.171-173.

91 Vevers, op.cit.

92 M.C.A. MSS. Richard Treffry jun. to George Osborne, 11 Feb. 1829.

of the most impressive anti-Emancipation speeches were made by M.T. Sadler, an ex-Methodist local preacher.[93]

The fact that official Methodism avoided overt political conflict does not detract from the growing Methodist antipathy to measures inspired by Catholics. What of the future? Catholic Emancipation had not solved Ireland's problems nor conciliated Catholic demands. Thomas Waugh, a Methodist preacher from Cork, assessed the Irish political scene in 1830 in these terms:

> "The Repeal of the Union has now laid as fast hold on the R. Catholic mind as "emancipation" (!!) did the other day." [94]

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93 See The Speech of M.T. Sadler M.P. for Newark, In the House of Commons on the Second Reading of the Roman Catholic Relief Bill March 17, 1829. (London, 1829). and
The Second Speech, on the third reading of the Bill, March 30, 1829. (London, 1829).

94 M.M.H. MSS. Thomas Waugh to Thomas Edwards 11 Oct. 1830.

V

METHODISM AND IRISH NATIONAL EDUCATION

> "Others [children] were sent to school, and learned at least to read and write; but they learned all kind of vice at the same time so that it had been better for them to have been without their knowledge than to have bought it at so dear a price.
>
> At length I determined to have them taught in my own house, that they might have an opportunity of learning to read, write, and cast accounts (if no more), without being under almost a necessity of learning heathenism at the same time."
>
> John Wesley.[1]

> "... the absolute necessity of making the education we give to the humbler classes of our countrymen, primarily and directly a religious education."
>
> Jabez Bunting.[2]

> "... that to give the poor of Ireland general instruction without Scriptural education, would be the worst and most pernicious thing that could be done."
>
> Joseph Butterworth.[3]

The educational principles of the Methodist founder, his most powerful ministerial successor, and the Methodist M.P. were fundamentally in agreement. They saw education not as an end in itself but as a means of creating Christian character in children. In a sermon preached before the Sunday School Union, Bunting presented three primary aims to the teachers; to help the children read the best books, principally the Bible, to communicate the general principles and obligations of Christian morality and to develop habits of piety and virtue.[4] Both Wesley and

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1 Wesley's Letters, ii. p.309.

2 J. Bunting. Speech on National Education (Manchester, 1839), p.4.

3 Hansard, N.S. xi. 324.

4 J. Bunting, A Great Work described and recommended in a Sermon preached on Wednesday, May 15, 1805, before the Members of the Sunday School Union, pp.6-10.

Bunting said that ill-disciplined and reckless children would grow up into equally ungodly adults. Wesley declared notoriously that "he that plays when he is a child will play when he is a man";[5] and Bunting repeated this idea in his sermon:

> "Children like tender osiers take the bow,
> And as they first are fashion'd still will grow."[6]

For these Methodists, any education without scriptural instruction was not just second best, but positively harmful. Wesley was concerned about education because he believed in the detrimental effect of a non-religious curriculum. It was knowledge bought at too dear a price. Bunting stated that the immediate establishment of religious schools for the instruction of the rising generation was the most effective method of preserving the stability of the state.[7] The Wesleyans were fond of gathering statistics to prove this case. For them Ireland was the great example of the consequences arising from the ignorance of the Word of God. Bunting quoted the words of Bishop Porteus[8] that the lack of education in Ireland resulted in "such scenes of wanton cruelty and savage ferocity, as exceed the power of description."[9] But, no matter how grim the situation in Ireland, the Wesleyans disliked "general instruction without Scriptural education." The Methodists were keenly aware of the need surrounding them, but they did not think that it could

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5 Quoted by H.F. Matthews, Methodism and the Education of the People, p.25 See pp.16-30 for "Wesley's theory of Education".

6 Bunting, A Great Work Described, p.9.

7 Ibid., p.20.

8 Porteus, Bishop of London (1787-1808), was an anti-calvinist but a keen supporter of the evangelical party.

9 Bunting, op.cit., pp.21-22.

be met by sacrificing principle.

Another Wesleyan educational principle was that Wesleyans should control their own education. "I determined to have them taught in my own house" formed a strong element in Methodist thinking. Bunting developed this idea in a speech to the Stewards and Leaders of the Manchester Circuit on the management of Sunday schools.[10] He objected to an interdenominational Sunday school system on three grounds. Firstly there was no credal security that pure Christianity would be taught in such schools. Secondly, because of their independence from the churches, they "might become Roman Catholic, Calvinistic, Socinian, or any other schools." Thirdly, he protested against the fruits of Methodistical pulpit labour being planted in a different garden. However the Wesleyans were in a difficult position, for they had neither the means nor the organisational structures to solve the obvious problems. In the early nineteenth century, they slowly developed their own enterprises while giving support to those agencies which most closely approximated to their own ideals.

The Methodists made their most telling contribution in these years to Sunday school education. It is difficult to chart Methodist participation in the first quarter of the century, since it was not until 1827 that the Conference took a strong interest in what was happening at the local level. In that year the Conference drew up a set of rules for the management of Sunday schools. Each school had to affiliate with a Methodist chapel, thereby giving the Conference closer control.[11]

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10 The speech was delivered on 20 Sept. 1826 and was recorded in the MS. Scrapbook of James Everett. It forms an Appendix in W.R. Ward, The Early Correspondence of Jabez Bunting.

11 Mathews, op.cit., p.42.

A table compiled from the 1834 Report of the Manchester Statistical Society[12] indicates the extent of the Methodist enterprise. The table gives the comparative strength of denominational Sunday schools in the towns of Manchester, Salford, Liverpool, Bury and York. The Methodist schools accounted for 32% of the total, a percentage only marginally smaller than the Church of England, and substantially greater than any of the dissenting denominations. In fact the Methodists had more schools and scholars than the Baptists, Congregationalists, Roman Catholics and Unitarians put together. An article in the Eclectic Review in 1846 stated that the Wesleyans had established "more than four thousand Sunday schools, with nearly eighty-two thousand teachers, and five hundred thousand scholars."[13] It was a great achievement in such a short period of time.

In Ireland also, there were rapid strides in the development of Sunday school education. In 1823, the Irish Conference appointed a Sunday school committee which collected statistics and reported to the next conference. In 1824 there were one hundred and thirty-eight schools with nine thousand one hundred and ninety-one scholars.[14]

In spite of the valiant and commendable efforts of those engaged in Sunday school education, it was clear to all that they could not possibly meet the needs of the nation. A report on Manchester in 1836, revealed that, of 2,000 children between the ages of 13 and 14 examined in Sunday schools, 53% could not read and 88% could not write their own names.[15] An effective system of daily education was clearly necessary.

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12 This table is reproduced in Mathews, p.51.
13 "Methodism as it is", Eclectic Review, N.S. xx. (1846), pp.129-168.
14 C.H. Crookshank, History of Methodism in Ireland, iii. p.68.
15 Mathews, op.cit., p.53.

In the early nineteenth century two societies were formed to cope with this problem. The Nonconformists supported the schools assisted by the British and Foreign School Society, founded in 1808. The instruction given was primarily evangelical,[16] with extracts from the Scriptures to be read. No catechism was employed and each child was to attend the place of worship to which its parents belonged. Three years later the Established Church set up "The National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Church of England." In these schools the teachers were Anglicans and the pupils were taught the church liturgy and catechism.

In contrast to these societies, the Methodist efforts were more sporadic and localised. There was no centrally organised educational structure and no government money was available, so all was left to philanthropic efforts in the local circuits. "By 1837 the Connexion boasted no more than nine infant-schools and twenty-two day schools for elder scholars in the whole country."[17]

Methodist efforts must have been even more primitive in 1820, when Henry Brougham sought to introduce a Bill for the Education of the Poor. According to Brougham's plan the government was to establish schools in any parish where "there was no school within the district, or none in the adjoining districts sufficiently near to be available to the inhabitants of that district, or that there was only one school where two were necessary."[18] The master of the school was to be a member of the Church of England and the local clergyman had a veto on any appointment.

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16 J. Murphy, Church, State and Schools in Britain, 1800-1970, p.5.

17 Mathews, op.cit., p.121.

18 Hansard, N.S. ii. 68.

The schools were to be maintained in part by a local school rate. No religious book apart from the Scriptures was to be taught and only the Bible was to be used in any times of worship. Provision was made for teaching the church catechism and portions of the liturgy, but dissenters could absent themselves. The strong links Brougham recommended between the government schools and the Church of England was surprising from a man of his convictions, and the plan obviously found no favour with the dissenters.

The Methodist reaction to Brougham's Bill throws light upon the development of Wesleyan educational principles. T.P. Bunting states that the measure excited "considerable alarm, and, in some quarters, the wish for a Connexional agitation against it."[19] Jabez Bunting's correspondence shows this to be true, but in almost every case local Methodist opposition was the result of Dissenting pressure. Thus, some of the Stewards and Leaders from Carlisle could write:

> "We have been sometime anxiously waiting for information from our Committee of Privileges respecting Mr. Brougham's Education Bill; being repeatedly solicited by the Dissenters to unite in preparing to oppose its probably not designed but obviously persecuting spirit." [20]

This letter goes on to summarise the Methodist dilemma. The provision of a more extensive educational system was obviously attractive as was the centrality of the Bible in the curriculum. The Wesleyans had less reason than the Dissenters to object to the favours bestowed on the Church of England, "our parent Church."[21] The Committee of Privileges met and decided to take no connexional action in opposition to Brougham's

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19 T.P. Bunting, The Life of Jabez Bunting, ii. p.185.

20 James King and others to Jabez Bunting, 9 Mar. 1821 in Ward, op.cit.

21 Ibid.

Bill.[22] Bunting explained why in a letter to Joseph Womersley, superintendent of the Carlisle circuit:

> "Party interests and petty considerations should not hinder so great an object. Particular clauses it is desirable to have omitted or modified... But as to opposing the Bill in toto and limine, this would on our part be unbecoming and improper. Dissenters are opposed to all Religious Establishments and of course to every form of National Instruction connected at all with an Establishment. But the Methodists as a body have not adopted such views."[23]

The Methodists did not object to the basic principle of Brougham's Bill, a more national system of daily education, incorporating the teaching of the Scriptures. They simply disliked, though not as intensely as the Dissenters, the privileged position given to the Established Church.[24] The peculiar position of Wesleyan Methodism half way between Church and Dissent was to pose problems as politicians sought to come to terms with the nation's education needs. The problem became more complex as Methodism grew in numerical and political strength. The Evangelical revival introduced a third element into the traditional division between Church and Dissent. Brougham's Bill was a preview of the social and political consequences of an increasingly complex set of circumstances.

The Methodist reaction to National Education in Ireland also modified the Wesleyan approach. Up to the beginning of the nineteenth century the major educational provision for Ireland was in the form of

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22 M.C.A. MSS. Minutes of the Committee of Privileges for 1820.

23 M.C.A. MSS. Jabez Bunting to Joseph Womersley, 15 Mar. 1821.

24 For more information on the Methodist response, see letters 34-36 in Ward, op.cit., and an unpublished thesis by W.B. Maynard, The Constitutional Authority of Dr. Jabez Bunting over Wesleyan Methodism as seen through his Correspondence, University of Durham, M.A., 1970, p.85.

government endowed schools. Parish, diocesan, royal and charter schools[25] all received financial aid from the government. This tradition of state intervention was designed primarily to bolster up the Protestant Ascendancy and in that sense the schools were an attack on Roman Catholicism. This implicit attack was more explicit in the development of penal laws on education. Acts passed in the reigns of William, Anne and George I provided that "no person whatsoever of the papist religion shall publicly teach school",[26] and that no Roman Catholic child was to be sent to "parts beyond the seas in order to be educated in the popish religion." To get any education the Catholics were forced to set up a network of 'hedge schools'. Toward the end of the eighteenth century the educational provisions of the penal code were repealed, particularly in Gardiner's Act of 1782.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Ireland's five million people had very few educational opportunities and they were confined to the protestants. However, the obvious need of the country stimulated action on a wide variety of fronts. A Commission was established in 1788[27] and made its report three years later. The report recommended that Roman Catholics be admitted to the body of laymen controlling the local parish schools, and that clergy of all denominations be allowed access to the schools to teach religious doctrine and therefore prevent proselytism. The report was never published and its significance lies in the fact that it recognised Roman Catholic interests had to be considered in any plan for national education in Ireland. A Commission which met from 1806 to 1812

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25 See D.H. Akenson, The Irish Education Experiment. Chapter 2, The Eighteenth Century Background.

26 An Act to Restrain foreign Education, (7 William 3 c.4). Quoted by Akenson, p.42.

27 See Akenson, p.70, for the members of the commission.

concluded that no educational system could be effectively executed which did not accept the principle "that no attempt shall be made to influence or disturb the peculiar religious tenets of any sect or description of christians."[28]

Although Parliament was clearly interested in Irish education nothing concrete had been done, so the ground was left free for voluntary effort, mostly by societies formed as a consequence of the evangelical revival. The Association for Discountenancing Vice and Promoting the Knowledge and Practice of the Christian Religion was founded by three members of the established church in 1792. After initial ineffectiveness the society was boosted by an annual parliamentary grant dating from 1800. It was exclusively controlled by the clergy of the established church and the Church of England catechism was used in its schools, and became increasingly vigorous in proselytism.

The London Hibernian Society was formed in 1806 for unashamedly Protestant purposes:

> "The hope, therefore, that the Irish will ever be a tranquil and loyal people, and still more that piety and virtue will flourish among them, must be built on the anticipated reduction of popery." [29]

Butterworth and Allan were enthusiastic supporters of this society, the former being a committee member.[30] Its aims were to provide scriptural education in day, Sunday, and adult schools; to distribute the Scriptures and to employ Scripture Readers through whom "the Society attempts to effect that for the ignorant peasant in his cabin,

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28 Ibid., pp.77-78.

29 First Report of the Commissioners of Irish Education Inquiry, p.66. Akenson, op.cit., p.82.

30 Hansard, xxxvi. 1318.

which the teacher of youth is effecting for his ignorant offspring in the School."[31] The society incurred great opposition from the Roman Catholic priesthood, and the correspondence flowing into the society's headquarters was not unlike the letters from the Irish Methodist missionaries. This was scarcely surprising, since the aim was the same - the destruction of Roman Catholicism in Ireland. Irish representatives of the Hibernian Society wrote:

"The Priest of this place is a most determined opposer of the Schools."[32]

or again -

"I have desired the Master to explain to you the violent conduct of the Priest, in forcing Protestant children from the Schools." [33]

In spite of this Catholic opposition, the Hibernian Society indignantly rebutted allegations of proselytism. Butterworth stated in the Commons that the schools "were instituted for the most benevolent purposes, not with a view of making proselytes."[34] Clearly the margin here between evangelical enthusiasm and dishonesty was narrow.

In 1825, when Catholic sensibilities were particularly acute, Daniel O'Connell accused the society of deviating from its understood principle of not seeking to proselytise Irish Catholic children.[35] The reply to Thomas Webster, the Secretary to the London Hibernian Society,

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31 The Nineteenth Annual Report of the London Hibernian Society, for Establishing Schools, and Circulating the Holy Scriptures in Ireland (London, 1825), p.7.

32 Ibid., From a reader and Cursory Inspector, 15 July 1824.

33 Ibid., From a Clergyman, 4 Oct. 1824.

34 Hansard, xxxvi. 1318.

35 Daniel O'Connell to the Rev. Thomas Webster, (Secretary to the London Hibernian Society), 25 May 1825. Appended to the Nineteenth Annual Report.

is instructive for what it reveals about evangelical attitudes to Roman Catholicism in Ireland:

> "Instances of secession from the Roman Catholic religion, produced by the Society's system of education, it is neither the intention of the Committee to deny, nor to conceal; but instances in which these secessions were produced by an exertion of the Society's influence, and not by the discoveries of Holy Writ, they conscientiously believe to have no existence in fact." [36]

The distinction between the "Society's influence" and "the discoveries of Holy Writ" neatly by-passed the charge of proselytism, but it was unlikely to convince Roman Catholic leaders, both clerical and lay. Nevertheless, the Hibernian Society achieved a great deal in Ireland. In 1825 it claimed to have 753 day schools with 67,722 scholars and 181 adult schools with 10,117 pupils, to employ seventy Scripture Readers, and to have circulated 14,298 copies of the Scriptures.[37] Over half of these schools were in Ulster.[38] The Hibernian Society suffered considerably from the educational commissioners' recommendation that the Kildare Place Society should not assist any school which was in any way connected with other institutions.[39] As a result numbers of schools and scholars declined from 1826 onwards,[40] and by 1829 there were only 520 day schools and 43,250 scholars.

Other societies which declared for a scriptural education, and were therefore accused of proselytism by Roman Catholics, were the Baptist Society for promoting the Gospel in Ireland founded in 1814

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36 Thomas Webster to Daniel O'Connell, 7 June 1825. Ibid.

37 The Nineteenth Annual Report.

38 See the tables on p.2 and p.23 of the Twentieth Annual Report.

39 Twentieth Annual Report, pp.11-22.

40 See London Hibernian Society, "Extracts of Correspondence"; July, 1827; Jan. 1828; Sept. 1828; and Jan. 1829.

and the Wesleyan Methodist mission schools which date from the early 1820's. In 1826 the Rev. Thomas Edwards, the agent of the Methodist Missionary Committee for the Irish Schools, reported that there were twenty schools with 1,479 scholars.[41] A feature of these schools was catechetical instruction and the commitment to memory of considerable portions of the Scriptures.

The society which came closest to winning the support of Roman Catholics was the Kildare Place Society. Daniel O'Connell was on the society's board of managers and Catholics were patrons of some schools.[42] The society received substantial parliamentary grants from 1816 to 1832 and by 1831 it claimed to have 1,621 schools containing 137,639 scholars. Even though Roman Catholics had given support to these schools, they had always been uneasy about the reading of the Scriptures without note or comment. O'Connell's resignation from the society and the decision of its managers to grant some of their income to the protestant proselytising groups, substantially weakened Catholic support.

> "In 1824, there were fifty-seven schools of the Association for Discountenancing Vice, 340 schools of the London Hibernian Society, and thirty Baptist Society schools receiving aid from the Kildare Place Society." [43]

The growing Catholic opposition led to the presentation of a petition by Henry Grattan and signed by a number of Catholic Bishops.[44] The crux of the petition was the nature of religious instruction.

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41 C.H. Crookshank, op.cit., p.94.

42 Akenson, op.cit., pp.86-94.

43 Ibid., p.90.

44 The petition was signed by P. Curtis, D. Murray, O.Kelly, R.Laffan, J. Murphy, J. Magauran, J. Doyle, and K. Maram. Hansard, N.S. x. 847.

They desired a combined literary and religious instruction, but by the latter they meant "catechistical instruction, daily prayer, and the reading of religious books." They complained that the "trustees of the former grant give aid to schools wherein the sacred scriptures, without note or comment, are read by the children (a regulation which does not accord with the discipline of the Roman Catholic Church)."[45] In March 1824 yet another commission was established to investigate Irish education, convened by Catholic demands. Even though the solution to the problem was still a long way off there was a growing agreement about its terms of reference, neatly summed up by Peel:

> "In the education of the poor of Ireland two great rules ought never to be abandoned: first, to unite as far as possible, without violence to individual feelings, the children of protestants and catholics under one common system of education; and secondly, in so doing, studiously and honestly to discard all idea of making proselytes." [46]

By the mid-1820s something quite radical was needed to solve Ireland's educational difficulties. The Catholic church emerging from the era of the penal laws could no longer be satisfied with the Kildare Place Society, and certainly not by the protestant proselytising societies. No viable new system could afford to ignore Catholic demands because of the cold facts of Irish population statistics. The evangelical societies had failed to convert Ireland to protestantism and the time had come when religious realities of Ireland demanded political and social expression. Education was obviously going to be a key issue.

How did the Methodists fit into this picture? In Parliament Butterworth was still campaigning for the old order, and between 1824

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45 Ibid., 845.

46 Ibid., 843.

and 1826 he made a number of speeches on Irish education containing several basic principles. He argued that in any system of education the Word of God must be pre-eminent,[47] and supported the Kildare Place Society because of its scheme of Bible reading without note or comment.[48] He felt that the inadequacy of the present system in Ireland was due to the interference of the Roman Catholic priesthood.[49] If the Catholics wanted education they could either withdraw their opposition to the present agencies or else pay for their own efforts:

> "They boasted that the Catholic Association could raise £1,000 a week for projects of sedition and designs against the state. If they possessed proper feelings of benevolence, they would far more readily contribute that much for the education of their poor." [50]

Nor was Butterworth convinced that proselytism was a bad thing:

> "He declared openly, and he wished others to do the same, his zeal for proselytism. What, then, were they to be frightened at the sound of a word? It was proselytism from ignorance and vice, to morality and knowledge." [51]

Butterworth was certainly not outside Wesleyan tradition in holding out for a truly scriptural education.

Outside Parliament, more significant events were taking place within Methodism. Irish affairs had come to the forefront of the English conference, because of the disturbing financial difficulties of the Irish connexion and a renewed outbreak of agrarian violence. The Irish conference reported a loss of eight hundred and twenty members in

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47 Ibid., N.S. xi. 324.

48 Ibid., N.S. xv. 23 and 82.

49 Ibid., 23.

50 Ibid., 230.

51 Ibid.

1822, the reasons for which they explained in the Annual Address to the British conference:

> "Outrages, robberies, burnings, and murders have encompassed us and our societies, in almost every direction, in the Southern and Western counties. Societies have been scattered..." 52

In the light of such reports the English Methodists decided to take positive action. A circular was sent out to the Irish missionaries in March 1823, requesting extensive information and advice.[53] The thirteenth question on the circular was - "Is there anything you wish to suggest for the promotion of the object of your mission?" Of the replies received Gideon Ouseley, William Reilly, William Cornwall and George Hansbrow all requested schools to provide a truly religious education.[54] Ouseley summed up their feelings in his call for "Schools, Bibles and more missionaries who can speak in the native tongue."[55]

As a result of their findings, the missionary society in London decided to increase the number of Irish missionaries from eleven to twenty-one and to establish day schools.[56] Valentine Ward was appointed to visit Ireland to look into the possibility of setting them up. His extensive report on this visit was in the hands of the missionary committee by December 1823 and it is a valuable source for an understanding

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52 The Annual Address of the Irish Conference to the English Conference (1822).

53 M.M.H. Circular dated 29 Mar. 1823.

54 M.M.H. MSS. The replies of the missionaries were collected and sent off in the form of a report. The manuscripts of the M.M.H. are not catalogued but are arranged in chronological order.

55 M.M.H. For Ouseley's full reply see his letter to the editor of the Sligo Journal dated 16 May 1823. He sent copies to all the members of the Privy Council in London and to the Methodist Missionary Society. Its main educational thrust was that everyone should be able to read the New Testament.

56 See The Answer of the English Conference to the Annual Address of the Irish Conference (1823).

of Methodist attitudes to education in Ireland.[57] Ward was surprised at the extent of "respectable" education. He attributed that to the "commendable exertions of many benevolent individuals in promoting the instruction of the poor" and to the work of the societies, "especially the Hybernian, and Kildare Street, and Baptist education societies, and the Sunday school Society for Ireland." These are the societies which any Methodist might support, but his concluding recommendations are surprisingly liberal. He records the opposition of the Roman Catholic Priests to children being taught the Protestant version of the Scriptures, and gives support to the Kildare Place Society in its religious provision:

> "One of the most essential of their regulations is, that all catechisms and books of religious Controversy shall be excluded, and the Scriptures either the Protestant or Catholic, as is most agreeable to the Parents, used by all the Scholars capable of reading in them - This principle I recommend to the Committee." [58]

Ward's proposals to let Catholic children use a Catholic version of the scriptures and to remove catechisms did not find much favour with the Irish preachers. William Stewart wrote to the secretaries of the Missionary Society in London that Ward's "ministerial labours" were most acceptable but "some differences of opinion existed between him and the brethren generally, on certain points relative to the schools in contemplation - particularly in reference to the prejudices and peculiarities of the Roman Catholics, to which Mr. Ward thinks a greater degree of accomodation should be afforded, than the Brethren here, and the protestant public would be willing to concede." [59]

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57 M.M.H. MSS. Report of Mr. Ward's visit to the Irish Missionaries in the Autumn of 1823. 22pp. It was received on 8 Dec. 1823.

58 Ibid., p.9.

59 M.M.H. MSS. William Stewart to Messrs. Taylor and Watson, 29 Nov.1823.

Stewart's letter indicates the mood of the Irish preachers. They were in a tough missionary battlefield. As the purpose of the new schools was to aid the missionary effort, why should they compromise with the forces of "superstition and idolatry?" The very fact that the schools were to encourage missionary enterprise ensured that they would proselytise. The views of the Irish preachers were closer to Butterworth than Ward. On this occasion the opinions of the men on the spot counted for more than Ward's, because when Thomas Bewley, Ward's successor as Agent of the missionary committee, visited the six new mission schools[60] in 1824 he was disturbed at their lack of religious instruction, especially in the scriptures and catechisms.[61] When he asked why the children were so poorly taught "they immediately say, the Priest will not allow it, and the moment we begin to do so with Catholic children they will all be withdrawn from the school... the Priests openly oppose anything like Religious reading and instruction, and they have their argument founded on the injustice of proselytism."[62]

Bewley and the Methodist mission schools in Ireland were encountering a more self-aware, confident and aggressive Irish Catholicism. Perhaps Ward had sensed this and made his report on what he considered to be possible rather than fully desirable. 1824 was the year in which Grattan presented the petition from the Catholic Bishops and when the Catholic Association earnestly took up the education issue, even allocating part of the Rent to the aid of Catholic schools.[63]

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60 These schools were established at Ballina, Banagher, Lawrencetown, Cloghan, Ferbane and Kells.

61 M.M.H. MSS. Thomas H. Bewley to the Secretaries of the Wesleyan Missionary Society, (George Morley, Richard Watson, and John Mason jun.), 22 Oct. 1824.

62 Ibid.

63 J.A. Reynolds, The Catholic Emancipation Crisis in Ireland, 1823-1829, p.68.

Unfortunately for the Methodists, they began to set up their schools when the heyday of the evangelical proselytising societies was rapidly coming to an end. Faced with these problems, Bewley's letter to London in October sounded the desperate note of "what was to be done?"

Just five months later, Bewley recorded an incident in his journal relating to the school at Cloghan. A Kildare Street Society inspector called at the school and required all the children to read the Scriptures according to the Society's rules:

> "But the Priest of the Parish said, that he had it in order from the Bishop, to insist on all the Roman Children leaving the school immediately, if they were required to read the Protestant Bible - What should be done? What course ought to be steered? amidst such various and conflicting principles and opinions?" 64

Bewley was not the first and certainly not the last Englishman to be confused by the peculiar difficulties of Ireland. Roman Catholic Priests were using the most successful method of opposing the influence of the Wesleyan mission schools - they were threatening to boycott them if there was a hint of proselytism. This tactic gave the Methodists an impossible choice of accommodating the curriculum to the desires of the Roman Catholic clergy or having no Catholic children in the schools. Neither alternative was satisfactory.

Bewley was replaced as the Agent of the Missionary Committee for the Irish Schools by Thomas Edwards. He arrived at a difficult time when Catholic children were increasingly being withdrawn from all the Protestant schools. In January, 1828 he wrote a short snappy letter illustrating the tensions of that year:

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64 M.M.H. MSS. Extracts from the Journal of Thomas Bewley. Entry for 1 Mar. 1825.

> "A Catholic Model School is about to be formed, to prepare Catholic Masters for taking charge of their Schools. I am sorry to say, at present I think the Priests are more successful in taking away the children from Protestant schools, than I have known before." [65]

Only three years later the school at Cloghan had to be closed down because the priest had withdrawn the Catholic children.[66] In spite of these setbacks, the Methodists persevered. In 1831 Elijah Hoole reported that in the twelve schools he visited in the north, there were 1,422 children, 369 of them Catholics.[67] The Methodist educational effort in Ireland was given a much needed boost by Dr. Adam Clarke and some wealthy patrons who founded six[68] schools and put them under the control of the local circuit superintendent. Clarke was censured at the 1831 conference for failing to hand over the management of the schools to the Missionary Committee in London. Bunting was particularly harsh on Clarke and proposed "That the Conference regrets the irregularity of Dr. Clarke's mode of establishing his schools in Ireland."[69] This incident on the eve of Stanley's educational proposals indicates how protective the English Conference was about the mission effort in Ireland.

This brief sketch of the Methodist attempts to form day-schools in

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65 M.M.H. MSS. Thomas Edwards to the Mission Secretaries, (George Morley, Dr. James Townley, John James and Richard Watson), 7 Jan. 1828.

66 Crookshank, op.cit., p.164.

67 Extract of a letter from Mr. Hoole, the Superintendent of the Irish Mission Schools, 22 Nov. 1831. Wesleyan Methodist Magazine. pp.65-66.

68 At Portrush, Cashel, Prolusk, Billy, Gorran and Lissan. See Crookshank, op.cit., p.156., and B. Gregory, Sidelights, pp.102 ff.

69 Gregory, Sidelights, p.104.

Ireland between 1823 and 1831 reveals that their efforts were firmly within the Wesleyan tradition i.e. instruction in the scriptures and the use of education for didactic purposes. In this endeavour they caught the Roman Catholic church in a period of increasing militancy, which was the backcloth to the Methodist response to the educational proposals of 1831.

The commission set up in 1824 to investigate Irish education was disbanded in 1827, having made nine reports. Although no solution was reached, it was apparent that any new system would have to include the principle of combined literary and separate religious instruction. In 1828 Thomas Spring-Rice moved that a parliamentary committee be set up with power to report its opinions to the House. The committee worked quickly and presented its report in mid-May, recommending the creation of a new system of united education in Ireland. Although this report was neglected at the time,[70] its principles became the basis of Lord Stanley's instructions to the Duke of Leinster in early November 1831.[71] Stanley stated that the Kildare Place Society was inadequate to meet the educational needs of Ireland because its "determination to enforce in all their schools the reading of the holy scriptures without note or comment" was obnoxious to the Roman Catholic church. A Board of Education drawn from several denominations was to superintend a system of national education. The schools were to be open four or five days of the week for combined literary and moral instruction while the other one or two days of the week were to be set aside for the religious education of the children by their respective clergy. The commissioners

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70 For a fuller discussion on this period, see Akenson, op.cit., pp.102-122.

71 Ibid., Appendix, pp.392-402.

were to assume "entire control over all books to be used in the schools, whether in the combined moral and literary or separate religious instruction."

The first Methodist response to these proposals was surprisingly favourable. Richard Watson wrote a series of articles in the Wesleyan Methodist Magazine under the section Retrospect of Public Affairs. The first article appeared in January, 1832 [72] and in it the author supported the principle of combined literary and separate religious instruction. Since Roman Catholics would not send their children to "Schools taught in the Protestant mode" the crux of the question for Watson was "Whether it is better to leave the Catholic peasantry wholly without education, or grant it to them in this way." Watson clearly preferred the latter. This is a little surprising because Watson, as resident Missionary Secretary in London from 1821 to 1827,[73] must have been aware of the feelings of the Irish missionaries. Although Watson wrote in April that "we have seen no reason to alter our opinion, notwithstanding the violent attacks it has sustained from persons professing to uphold the Protestant principle",[74] an article in the May issue reveals a slight weakening. There had obviously been a division of opinion within Methodism,[75] and Watson, although still supporting national education, was much more critical of its religious provisions than he had been in the preceding two articles. He argued that what was lacking in the national system should be made up by parents, ministers and voluntary associations:

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72 Wesleyan Methodist Magazine (1832). p.68.

73 D.N.B.

74 Wesleyan Methodist Magazine (1832). p.304.

75 Ibid., p.383.

> "With all those who argue from its [national system] defects to the necessity of more vigorously supporting schools, where the full system of our Christianity may be taught, we go with all our heart." [76]

The general tone of Watson's articles was one of cautious acceptance of the Government plan, "not as being all that could be wished, but all that could reasonably be hoped, in the circumstances of that country."[77] The most ardent opponents of this view within Methodism were Jabez Bunting and the whole Irish connexion. This was a strange alliance when one considers Bunting's views on Catholic Emancipation. In early May Bunting wrote a letter to Edmund Grindrod discussing the forthcoming business of the Conference. In it he states:

> "I know not how you view the new Irish Education Scheme. The Irish preachers and people are, almost to a man, strongly hostile to it; and so, after much and careful examination, so [sic] am I. It seems to me well-intentioned, perhaps, but bad in principle, utterly mistaken even as a measure of policy, founded on assumptions instead of facts, and in its practical bearings both on strict Catholics, on Protestants, and on the half-enlightened and inquiring class of nominal Papists, who now send their children in large numbers to Bible Schools, inconceivably mischievous..." [78]

Bunting was not the sort of man to let his opposition remain private. He chose the General Book Committee[79] meeting in July to launch his attack. The editor of the Wesleyan Methodist Magazine, Thomas Jackson,[80] was asked to apologise for allowing Watson's articles to be published. Jackson refused to give in and the complaint was formulated into a Resolution to be reported to the Conference.

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76 Ibid., p.384.

77 Ibid., p.304.

78 M.C.A. MSS. Jabez Bunting to Edmund Grindrod, 1 May 1832. cf. W.R.Ward, Early Victorian Methodism, p.16.

79 The M.S. minutes of this committee still exist in M.C.A., but this conflict is not recorded.

80 Jackson took up this post in 1824; his predecessor was Jabez Bunting.

Simultaneously in Ireland, the Irish preachers were preparing their own opposition. They were, of course, opposed to Stanley's scheme and the articles in the magazine only added insult to injury.[81] The Irish Conference began in Dublin on July 5. The English deputation included George Marsden, in his capacity as President, John Beecham as one of the Resident Missionary Secretaries and Elijah Hoole as agent of the missionary committee for the Irish schools. On Monday July 9,

> "The national system of education was introduced to the notice of Conference... by a very partial set speech from the President - Mr. Waugh followed in more violent style and concluded by proposing half a dozen resolutions to be adopted by the Conference... of their disapproval of the plan. The debate did not close at that sitting and when it was again introduced Mr. B [eecham] and I were absent - I think it was found so fruitful of long speeches that it was concluded to withdraw the Resolutions (they had been drawn up by the President himself) and a passing mention of their regret at the introduction of such a system is made in their address to the British Conference." [82]

This reference in the annual address to the British Conference was tactfully edited from the version published by Jackson in the magazine.[83]

The British Conference met in Liverpool on July 25 and the scene was obviously set for a confrontation over Irish national education. On one side there were Bunting, Marsden and the Irish Methodist preachers represented by Waugh, Stewart and Doolittle, with Watson, Jackson and James on the other. On the surface Bunting was not in a very strong position. After all it was he who first introduced the Retrospect on Public Affairs into the magazine when he was editor in 1821, as was pointed out in the course of the debate.[84] His other weakness was

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81 Crookshank, op.cit., p.165.

82 M.M.H. MSS. Elijah Hoole to John James, 12 July 1832. See also Hoole to James, 18 Jan, 9 July and 29 Oct. 1832.

83 Wesleyan Methodist Magazine (1832). pp.641-642.

84 Mentioned by Mr. Naylor, Gregory, op.cit., p.120.

mentioned by Mr. James:

> "I do not think that the Government Plan is to be censured in any extreme way. But I do not see how Mr. Bunting, who so strenuously advocated 'Catholic claims', can resist this plan of Irish education." [85]

Notwithstanding such difficulties, Bunting delivered an impressive speech. He refused to accept that his opposition to Irish national education was politically motivated. It was no more dabbling in politics to oppose the measure than it had been for Methodists to speak out against Lord Sidmouth's Bill in 1811 and the Luddite disturbances soon afterwards.[86] Were issues like this not the main reason for maintaining the Committee of Privileges? He explained his opposition to the Government plan:

> "I object because as a dissenter I am not allowed to have a school, unless certified, and if certified, to have an inquisitorial examination of books... I declare my faith that the Roman Catholics cannot be benefited, but by being turned over to Protestantism, and this cannot be done by imperial Parliament. Protestant children are turned over to Socinianism and Calvinism, and Roman Catholic children are delivered to ignorance and superstition." [87]

This speech is significant on a number of counts. It reveals a marked difference from Bunting's attitude to Brougham's Bill twelve years earlier. In that case, Bunting supported national education in principle but objected to some of the clauses.[88] That was Watson's ground in his articles in 1832. Why then was Bunting prepared to give up the obvious advantages of national education in 1832 when he had accepted them in 1820? There are two reasons. In Brougham's plan the

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85 Ibid., p.119.

86 T.P. Bunting, op.cit., p.277.

87 Gregory, op.cit., p.120.

88 Maynard, op.cit., p.148. He notices this difference but fails to attribute it to the influence of Roman Catholicism.

Word of God was central in the curriculum and this was patently not so in Stanley's scheme. Secondly, the denomination which stood to gain most from Brougham's plan was the Church of England whereas in Stanley's proposals the main beneficiary would be the Roman Catholic Church. "Roman Catholics cannot be benefited, but by being turned over to Protestantism." Bunting's summary of the Methodist missionary involvement in Ireland underlines the real nature of Wesleyan opposition in 1832. How can one spend Government money to educate children in a religion which is clearly false? What Bunting and the Irish preachers wanted to see was an extension of Irish education on pre-1831 principles; increased Government support for the Kildare Place Society and the protestant voluntary societies. If the path of progress meant giving financial aid to the Roman Catholic Church then the Irish Wesleyans were happy to preserve the past. Catholic demands were making the Methodists conservative.

Another important factor in Bunting's speech was his resort to the arguments of the Irish preachers after their divergence in 1829. Daniel McAfee, an Irish Methodist, wrote a pamphlet addressed to O'Connell stating that one of our "most serious objections to the plan as now patronized by Government, is the avowed fact, that there is no distinction made in it between true and false religion - between right and wrong; but that systems of religion are equally supported which are as much opposed to each other, as light is opposed to darkness."[89]

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89 Daniel McAfee, To Daniel O'Connell, Esq., M.P. There is no publishing place or date, but it was probably written in 1839 at Cork where McAfee was stationed. The pamphlet is in the I.W.H.S. archives.

McAfee, like Bunting, objected to the "essential latitudinarianism" of the plan, which was based on what Catholics were prepared to accept not on absolute standards of right and wrong. The Methodists had come across an essential difference between evangelical religion and politics. In the former, compromise is a sign of weakness whereas in the latter it is a basic necessity for a wide range of agreement. It was clear from Bunting's speech that he was anxious to have educational provision in religious rather than political terms. Education was to be another grey area in the blurring of distinctions between black and white, religion and politics. According to Bunting, who consistently held a high 'no politics' doctrine over Catholic Emancipation, Irish national education was as much within the sphere of the Committee of Privileges as Lord Sidmouth's Bill. This was not a kind of double think because within his own frame of reference he was entirely consistent. He judged Roman Catholic Emancipation to have been a political issue, whatever the rest of the connexion might have thought. In 1832 he judged the Reform Bill to be a political issue and attacked Jackson in passing for alluding to it in the Magazine:

> "As regards the 'Retrospect' in the Magazine I would not disapprove the Articles, but would not have a retrospect of political events... I would have an abstinence from politics." 90

Bunting judged national education to be primarily a religious matter and he consistently held to that position. The rest of the connexion could not always understand his reasoning. Mr. James must have spoken for many more when he contrasted Bunting's stances in 1829 and 1832. The Irish preachers were much easier to comprehend. They consistently and unanimously opposed any concession to Roman Catholicism

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90 Gregory, Sidelights, p.120.

either religious or political. For them it amounted to the same thing.

The connexional editor, Thomas Jackson, took the opposite line to Bunting in 1829 and in 1832. He objected strongly to Bunting's intervention over Catholic Emancipation and then wrote that "the Irish system of education is no party measure, but kindly and patriotically intended, and would doubtless have been a great benefit to the country had all the people united in good faith to carry it into effect."[91] Jackson's position was at least as complex as Bunting's and showed how Catholic pressure could create division in Methodist ranks.

Bunting's speech was also significant in the direction it gave to Methodist educational policy. His response to Brougham's Bill in 1820, taken in conjunction with Watson's articles on the Irish system, appeared to be guiding Methodism into a position of cautious support for an integrated national education policy. The need was so great in England and Ireland that only Government money could hope to meet it. Surely education was sufficiently desirable that it was worth compromising over the details. The Irish scheme wrecked this development because of the spectre of 'Popery'. Bunting's views in 1832 were all the more important because his two chief antagonists, James and Watson, were dead before the next conference.

While Bunting insisted on treating education as a purely religious matter, and while the Government was forced to take into account the legitimate political demands of various denominations, there was bound to be conflict, for there was one denomination which the Wesleyans could never countenance. Bunting was even prepared to argue "as a dissenter"

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91 Ibid., p.117.

in order to oppose educational concessions to Roman Catholicism.

Aside from the Methodist response, the Government's plan of Irish National Education was not a success. The Wesleyans were not the only group disappointed by Stanley's proposals. The Presbyterian evangelicals, led by Dr. Henry Cooke, were opposed on much the same grounds.[92] Cooke argued that the system was based on a "supreme despotic board. Three parts protestant establishment, two parts Roman Catholic, one part unitarian and one part Church of Scotland..."[93]

The Anglicans, especially the evangelicals, did not support the new system either. The Whig ecclesiastical reforms of the 1830s alienated them even more. As Akenson has put it, "Much of the anglican opposition to the national system was the result of a disease that infected nineteenth-century Irishmen of all the reformed faiths: a pathological fear of the Roman Catholic church."[94] The anglicans eventually created their own educational system through the Church Education Society founded in 1839.

The net result of this opposition was that the Irish national education system became, in practice if not in theory, a denominational one.[95] Moreover, it was a denominational system thoroughly dominated by the Roman Catholics. This was the galling fact which the Irish Methodists had to put up with in the 1830s. McAfee described it graphically:

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92 See Akenson, op.cit., pp.161 ff.

93 Ibid., p.162.

94 Ibid., p.190

95 Ibid., See the Tables, pp.214-224.

> "The priests appoint the masters - the priests controul the Board - the priests can keep the masters in the schools against the express authority of the Board... so that, at the present moment, these schools are as essentially popish, as if they had been expressly instituted for the teaching of that system of religion."[96]

By using the tactic of boycott the Roman Catholics had gained a system which effectively produced a protestant boycott. There could not be a lasting and acceptable compromise between bodies so bitterly opposed.

Within Methodism, the alignment of Bunting with the Irish preachers was one of the most important consequences of the government's educational proposals. The Irish Methodist opposition to Catholic Emancipation had been stunted by Bunting's application of the 'no politics' rule. 1832 witnessed a complete reversal. The views of the Irish Wesleyans would not have been given the same prominence in the British Conference but for the support of Bunting. With the educational needs of England still to be met, the Wesleyan debate over the Irish system was an interesting dress rehearsal.

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96 McAfee, op.cit., p.6.

VI

THE WATCHMAN AND 'RELIGIOUS POLITICS' 1835-1838

"Few writings of the age are more popular and influential than those which are entitled periodical and miscellaneous. They form a new and important era, not in literature and science only, but also in the most momentous of all human affairs, - religion." [1]

"The largest audience for periodical literature, in this age of periodicals, must obey the universal law of progress, and must, sooner or later, learn to discriminate." [2]

"Subscription to a periodical, almost irrespective of its content-matter, served Victorians as a kind of religious self-identification." [3]

There were over eighteen thousand periodicals of differing title published during the Victorian period.[4] They had an average 'run' of about twenty-eight years and approximately forty per cent were religious. The Wesleyan Methodist Magazine was a continuation of the Arminian or Methodist Magazine, first published by Wesley in 1777 and was, in common with most religious periodicals, a monthly, so escaping tax. By the 1840s, 24,000 copies a month were being printed, substantially more than either the Edinburgh or Quarterly Reviews.[5] It was a typical denominational organ in that the proportion of 'timeless' religious articles to news was very high. Its constituent elements were biographies, sermons, missionary notices, book reviews, small articles on general knowledge, obituaries and some poetry. It was distinctively

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1 The Editor's Preface, Wesleyan Methodist Magazine, London, 24 Nov.1830.

2 Wilkie Collins, The Unknown Public. Household Words, xviii (1858), p.222.

3 P. Scott, Victorian Religious Periodicals: Fragments that Remain in Derek Baker (Ed.), Sources, Methods and Materials of Ecclesiastical History, (1975), 325-339.

4 Ibid., p.325.

5 Ibid., p.328.

Wesleyan in its religious orientation, "to seize every opportunity of pleading for the religion of the heart in all its purity, peace, and power",[6] and, of course in its references to internal Methodist affairs.[7] The June issue traditionally reported the "May Meetings" of the various evangelical societies which the Wesleyans supported.[8]

In spite of its low circulation in comparison to the total membership, the Wesleyan Methodist Magazine gave Methodism a greater coherence and sense of self-identity. Subscribing to this magazine was as much a sign of religious allegiance as attendance at chapel. Until 1821, when Bunting introduced the section 'Retrospect of Public Affairs' the magazine was purely religious. After the conference debate of 1832 the "Retrospect" was not included in the magazine in 1833 or 1834. Its reappearance in 1835 heralded the initiation of a new and different Methodist publication[9] in the form of a weekly newspaper called the Watchman. This enterprise was justified by reference to the recent measure of Parliamentary Reform which conferred the elective franchise

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6 The Editor's Preface, Wesleyan Methodist Magazine, London, 24 Nov.1834.

7 For example the September issue generally gave news of the Irish and English Conferences and published the Stations of the Preachers for the coming year.

8 In 1830 the list numbered twenty:

(1) The Wesleyan-Methodist Missionary Society; (2) The Church Missionary Society; (3) The British and Foreign Bible Society; (6) The Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews; (7) The Irish Society of London; (8) The Sunday-School Society; (9) The Christian Instruction Society; (10) The Port of London and Bethel Union Society; (11) The British and Foreign-School Society; (12) The Naval and Military Bible Society; (13) The Newfoundland and British North America School Society; (14) The British Reformation Society; (15) The London Missionary Society; (16) The Continental Society; (17) The Religious Tract Society; (18) The London Society for Female Servants; (19) The Sunday-School Union; (20) The Anti-Slavery Society.

9 The Wesleyan Methodist Magazine (1835), "Christian Retrospect", pp.153-155.

on many Methodists, and by the "passion" for change which was so "extensively prevalent." The new publication was to be "free from party violence, and from all those low and disgusting personalities..."[10] Its function was merely to bring before its readership the most important passing events, "with such suggestions as would lead to a just conception of their character and public bearing." Even this careful language makes it clear that the newspaper was to be opinionative as well as informative.

James Wood, a Wesleyan tory politician from Manchester wrote to Bunting about the new paper in March 1834.[11] In Liverpool and Manchester some Methodists had for some time "deeply lamented the evident want of some correct and frequent medium of communication throughout the connexion." They were concerned about the type of periodicals which were increasingly finding their way into Methodist homes. As a result ten people[12] had resolved to begin the new enterprise although they were obviously fishing for wider connexional support. To allay the fears of the Conference it was proposed to place the management of the paper in a committee consisting of five laymen appointed by the proprietors and five preachers appointed by Conference among whom should be the editor of the Wesleyan Methodist Magazine, one of the tutors of the proposed Theological Institution, and one of the general Missionary Secretaries.[13] Wood's

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10 Ibid., p.154.

11 W.R. Ward, Early Victorian Methodism, pp.48-51.

12 They were: James Wood, Manchester; Thomas Farmer, Esq., London; John Fernley, Esq., Manchester; George Heald, Esq., Liverpool; Joshua P. Westhead, Esq., Manchester; James Heald, Esq., Parr's Wood; Peter Rothwell, Esq., Bolton; Thomas Sands, Esq., Liverpool; Mr. T. Percival Bunting, Manchester.

13 Ward, op.cit., p.49, footnote.

letter indicated that the proprietors were very keen to get Bunting's support. They succeeded because it was Bunting who brought the matter before the Conference in August 1834. He had to tread warily as he had come under criticism for vigorously supporting Henry Pownall, the tory candidate for Finsbury[14] at a time when J.R. Stephens was being disciplined for radical political activity. Bunting, sensing the mood of Conference, did not press for a resolution of unqualified support for the paper. He was content to act without official Conference support since he doubted whether "a distinct promise of encouragement, obtained as it must have been by something like pledges on our part, would not have fettered us too much in our proceedings, and involved, also, a liability in future Conferences to the annoyance of much cavil and animadversion from the few preachers (few, but bold and noisy) who do not agree with us in opinion on public and methodistical questions."[15]

Bunting assured Wood that he had canvassed as much support as possible without fanning the flames of opposition. Humphrey Sandwith, a Bridlington surgeon,[16] was chosen to edit the projected newspaper, although it soon became apparent whose views he was reflecting. Soon after the paper started Bunting wrote to Beecham that "Dr. Sandwith came yesterday. I have laboured hard to impress him with our views as to what kind of leading articles we are now especially wanting."[17]

The Watchman made its appearance in January 1835 and its aim was expressed in the opening article: "The paramount duty, therefore, of a religious monitor on political subjects is, in general, that of

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14 Ibid., p.76, note 2.
15 Ibid., p.83.
16 Ibid., p.73.
17 Ibid., pp.129 and 136-7.

moderating the effervescence of party feeling on both sides."[18]

Only time would tell if the Watchman would satisfy this aim or merely contribute to the "effervescence." However, a paper, which had its origins among the tories of Liverpool and Manchester and which was virtually a mouthpiece for Bunting and the preachers was unlikely to moderate "party feeling." Non-Methodists understandably made the assumption that the Watchman was created to represent "official" Wesleyan opinions. The Times stated that "a newspaper, named the Watchman, was started yesterday. It is evidently intended to represent the opinions and protect the interests of the Wesleyan Methodists."[19]

Within the connexion there was considerably less unanimity. Robert Pilter, the superintendent of the Rotherham circuit wrote Bunting that "the Watchman is over-Toryish for our Rotherham people."[20] John Davis, the superintendent of the Penzance circuit wrote that "the Watchman if I am not very much mistaken is likely by its party politics to cause a great deal of what is unpleasant in this part of the world."[21]

It was with some internal disturbance that the Watchman gave the illusion of representing the opinions of the British Wesleyan Methodists. The political climate into which it was born was not very congenial to the Wesleyan tories. The constitutional revolution of the years 1828-32 had seriously weakened the Protestant Constitution. The repeal of the

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18 Watchman, 5 Jan. 1835.

19 Times, 6 Jan. 1835.

20 Robert Pilter to Jabez Bunting, 26 Feb. 1835. Ward, op.cit., p.124.

21 John Davis to Jabez Bunting, 3 Mar. 1837. Ward, op.cit., p.182.

Test and Corporation Acts broke down the Anglican qualification for offices of State and municipalities. Catholic Emancipation enabled Roman Catholics to sit in the legislature and the Reform Act gave increased political strength to the opponents of the Establishment in England and in Ireland.[22] Pressure from Dissent became explicit in a list of six grievances drawn up by the Deputies in March, 1833 and subsequently used by the United Committee. They were compulsory conformity to the Anglican Prayer Book in Marriage Services; contributions to Church Rates; absence of legal registration for births and deaths and of burial rights in parochial churchyards; liability of places of worship to poor rates and exclusion from Oxford and Cambridge.[23] The Wesleyans along with the Quakers refused to support these demands. The Methodists were still a long way from an alliance with organised Dissent, and their numbers and influence were sorely needed.

O'Connell brought pressure from another angle. He was opposed to church establishments in general and to the Church of Ireland in particular. As the ultimate victor in the campaign for Catholic Emancipation and as a strong supporter of Irish National Education, he was rapidly becoming a thorn in Methodist flesh. His political programme in 1830 was not likely to inspire greater confidence. In addition to Repeal, he was committed to increased parliamentary reform, the abolition of tithes and changes in county and municipal government. This programme has been accurately described as "radical, Catholic and nationalist,"[24] and it is difficult to conceive of a political philosophy more alien to the founders of the Watchman.

22 See N. Gash Reaction and Reconstruction in English Politics 1832-1852 (1965). Chapter III Church and Dissent: the Conflict pp.60-91.
23 B.L. Manning, The Protestant Dissenting Deputies (1952), p.274.
24 A. Macintyre, The Liberator (1965), pp.14-15.

The Nonconformists, utilitarian radicals and Catholic nationalists united for an attack on the established church, and in particular the Church of Ireland. Even on utilitarian grounds their case was a strong one. The Irish Church maintained four archbishops and eighteen bishops and about 2,000 clergymen. This "clerical army" ministered to the spiritual needs of 800,000 people, just over a tenth of the total population.[25] On February 12, 1833 a Bill for the reform of the Church of Ireland was introduced in the Commons.[26] Ten sees were suppressed and the revenues of the remaining twelve were reduced. The debate on this Bill centred on the controversial principle of appropriation of ecclesiastical property for secular purposes. By the famous 147th clause, it was proposed to create a fund by allowing tenants on the bishops' estates to buy their land outright. The surplus, after the bishops were paid the equivalent of their former rents would be at Parliament's disposal. This clause was strongly supported by O'Connell and some of the Irish members, but it was dropped largely because of opposition from Peel and the Lords. However, it was already clear that the principle of Appropriation was to play a significant part in the politics of the 1830s. Russell's speech in May, 1834 was particularly threatening to the Irish church. He declared that"the revenues of the Church of Ireland were larger than necessary"[27] and that he would support appropriation even if it meant separation from his political colleagues. The Irish church question was clearly a long way from a solution.

There were other disturbing political straws in the wind for the Methodists. Ireland, far from being pacified by Catholic Emancipation,

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25 J.C. Beckett, The Making of Modern Ireland 1603-1923 (1966), p.311.
26 See E. Halevy, History, iii, pp.130-182 for a full account of this measure.
27 Hansard, 3rd Ser., xxiii, 666.

was more agitated than before. Secret agrarian societies and large peasant assemblies led to a general weakening of authority. In many areas, the focal point of this protest was the tithe system; "The Church in danger" yet again. Even the Union was not free from challenge. On 22nd April 1834 O'Connell introduced a motion for a Committee to inquire into the effects of the Union. The defeat of Repeal was inevitable but its reverberations did not augur well for the Methodists. It simply brought nearer the possibility of an alliance between O'Connell and the Whigs in exchange for liberal policies towards Ireland. For the Methodists reform and Repeal were equally unacceptable.

Although Peel had been recalled from Italy to head a new administration in November 1834, the political backcloth to the Watchman's appearance was not very congenial. The newspaper had two fundamental principles. The first was the desire to see Protestantism progress at the expense of Roman Catholicism in Ireland, religiously and politically.

> "But it is in Ireland that the battle has, both religiously and politically to be fought. So genuine, though as yet partial, is the revival of Protestantism there also, that our anxiety respects chiefly the maintenance of that machinery of Protestant piety and usefulness, which the political triumph of Popery threatens to cripple, if not destroy. Both the voluntary principle and that of endowments, as under the direction of Protestantism in Ireland, are the objects of its attack." 28

The second principle was that in the great battle against Popery, the obvious ally was the Established Church, both in England and in Ireland. It had the triple advantages of being at the centre of the political doctrine of the Protestant Constitution, the church of the Methodists' founder, and the largest and most wealthy Protestant

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28 Watchman, 13 Jan. 1836.

denomination in Ireland. There could be no better bulwark against encroaching Catholicism.

> "It is true, that in the spirit of our Founder we have felt it our duty to stem, as far as in us lay, the tide of revolutionary fury, as urged onwards by the Roman Catholics of Ireland and the Dissenters of England, with a view to sweep away our ecclesiastical institutions." [29]

> "The Establishment again throws up a mighty barrier against the advances of Romanism in that vast parochial system which keeps within the Protestant fold so great a proportion of the entire population." [30]

By the mid-1830s Wesleyan political opinion was stating that enough has been conceded to Catholicism, there could be no more concessions. In an article on the Protestant Association's first anniversary in May 1836, the Watchman criticised the simplistic idea that all the current difficulties emanated from two sources, Catholic Emancipation and Grey's Reform of the Irish Church. These measures could no longer be resisted, but "the strongest argument which the advocate of Protestantism can urge in resisting the unreasonable demands of Roman Catholics is, that a Protestant government has already yielded all that could be reasonably required, compatibly with the maintenance of its own rights."[31] In the face of further Catholic pressure the Wesleyans would be a conservative force.

These two principles, the support of Protestantism in Ireland and the desire to maintain the Established Church, dominated the politics of the Wesleyan leadership. That these principles were held more firmly by the Watchman than by the Wesleyans in general, was demonstrated at the 1834 Conference. Joseph Raynor Stephens, a Methodist preacher stationed at

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29 Watchman, 3 Aug. 1836.

30 Watchman, 13 June 1838.

31 Watchman, 18 May 1836.

Ashton-under-Lyne, spoke against the Establishment at public meetings and became secretary of the Church Separation Society.[32] Stephens was charged before a District Meeting with having made speeches "directly at variance with the general sentiments of Mr. Wesley and the Conference" and "distinguished by a spirit highly unbecoming a Wesleyan minister."[33] The case was debated at the ensuing Conference and naturally the whole question of Methodist relations to the Establishment and to Dissent was thoroughly discussed. Not surprisingly Bunting dominated the debate by basing his case on the precedent set by John Wesley.

> "Did he attend meetings to agitate against the Established Church? Would not Mr. Wesley have sent home any man who did this? Mr. Wesley dissented by employing lay-ministers, but he maintained a friendliness to the Church. He was nearer to the Church than to Dissent. And this is our proper position practically." [34]

There were other views in the Conference. Dr. Warren, soon to be at the centre of controversy over the Theological Institution protested against "our taking one step towards the Church." Dr. Beaumont argued that "Mr. Wesley, like a strong and skilful rower, looked one way while every stroke of his oar took him in the opposite direction. He never resolved that he would go no further from the Church. We must have room to breathe and move our arms. I do not like to be tacked on to the Established Church." Thomas Galland, a well-known liberal within the connexion made the telling point that there "are two kinds of neutrality: (1) a total abstention from the subject, or (2) fair play by allowing advocacy on both sides." Bunting and the Watchman were not prepared to

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32 See M.S. Edwards, The Resignation of Joseph Raynor Stephens in P.W.H.S. xxxvi, (Feb. 1967) pp.16-21. W.R.Ward, Religion and Society in England 1790-1850 (1972), pp.156-159, and B. Gregory, Sidelights, pp.150-164.
33 Gregory, op.cit., p.153.
34 Ibid., p.156.

allow either kind. But, if the Conference differed over Methodist relations with Church and Dissent, it was wholly opposed to Roman Catholicism; Methodist Evangelicalism if nothing else secured that. Therefore the more pressure came from Ireland and O'Connell, the more would Bunting's most enthusiastic supporters in the Conference of 1834, George Marsden and James Dixon, be strongly anti-catholic. O'Connell's activity strengthened the conservatism of the Wesleyan Conference just as the activities of the protestant proselytising societies in Ireland strengthened the educational demands of the Roman Catholic Church. Pressure and conflict, as it always does, were pushing the two sides to extremes, and liberals and moderates had a poor chance of gaining the ascendancy.

If Methodist attitudes to the Establishment were ambivalent, the same was true in reverse. The Watchman was aware that its support for the Church was not always appreciated. " 'Though, the more we love, the less we be loved', might well be the motto emblazoned on the escutcheon of Methodism as illustrative of her treatment by the Church and the Clergy, from the earliest of her annals to the present moment."[35] Although the Church was under attack, it was still selective in its choice of allies. In an article entitled "How is the Church to be saved?" the British Critic was true to its name in its reflections on Wesleyanism. The article states that the Church cannot afford to make enemies, "but we must state facts as they are."

> "We cannot conceal from ourselves, that, if other large portions of our fellow-Christians were to fall away from the Church, like the Wesleyan Methodists, the Church of England itself must soon melt and be dissolved, like the mountain snows in early summer. The Wesleyans may be favourable to an Establishment in the abstract, an

35 Watchman, 5 Apr. 1837.

> ideal Establishment, a prospective Establishment; but they are not favourable to the Establishment as it is. For else why did they secede from it?" [36]

The writer confesses that he is unable to understand the ambiguous position of Wesleyan Methodism between the clear-cut distinctions of Church and Dissent, but "till we see our way, we are constrained to reckon the Wesleyans among those neutral forces, whose component individuals may well be disposed to the Church, but whose collective demonstrations tell against her." The Christian Observer in December 1832 carried an article called "On the Enthusiasm of the Wesleyan Methodists" signed ironically by "A Watchman."[37] Even the Record joined in the attack by accusing Methodism of opposition "to the doctrines of grace and proximity to Pelagianism."[38] The Established Church was not ready to bury old disputes and the charges against the Methodists in the nineteenth century resembled those made almost a century before. Ecclesiastical controversialists have long memories and find it hard to forgive.

Nevertheless, there were those within the Establishment who acknowledged Wesleyan loyalty. The Archbishop of Canterbury, in a speech on the admission of the Dissenters to the universities, declared that it was unsafe to admit the Dissenters because of their desire to subvert the Establishment. He singled out the Wesleyans as an exception.[39]

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36 British Critic (1836), pp. 18 and 19.

37 Answered in the Wesleyan Methodist Magazine (1833), pp.32-43 and pp.106-112.

38 In an article by Rev. John Le Poer French, A.M. Curate of Killoe in Ireland, Record, 20 Dec. 1832. Reply in Wesleyan Methodist Magazine (1833), pp.186-191.

39 Hansard, 3rd Ser., xxv, 860. Note in Halevy, History iii, p.155.

In the same year Pusey wrote to Rev. R.W. Jelf that "I hope yet some means may be devised by which the Wesleyans at least may be reunited to the Church."[40] The Quarterly Review acknowledged that the Wesleyans were characterised by "a less hostile feeling towards the church" and that their constitution mitigated "the inseparable evils of the 'voluntary system'."[41] In a leading article in the Times in November 1836, the Dissenters were castigated for political action against the Established Church, but "As for the Wesleyan Protestants, we are happy to consider them in the most substantial points so identified with our own Established Church, that we cannot consider them with the Dissenters."[42]

Apart from some within the Established Church who were not prepared to forgive and forget, most political observers saw that Anglicans had little to fear from the Wesleyan Methodists. This was the background to Disraeli's oft quoted comic dialogue in Coningsby.

> " 'The Wesleyans', said Tadpole, 'we never counted on the Wesleyans.'
> 'I am told these Wesleyans are really a very respectable body,' said Lord FitzBooby, 'I believe there is no very material difference between their tenets and those of the Establishment. I never heard of them much till lately. We have too long confounded them with the mass of the Dissenters..." [43]

The attack on the Church from Dissenters and Catholics not only helped to enlist Methodist support for the Church, but set up a reaction within the Church itself. Before the Irish Church Bill of 1833 had gone through Parliament, Kehle delivered his famous sermon on National

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40 Pusey to Rev. R.W. Jelf, 16 Feb. 1834 in H.P. Liddon, Life of E.B. Pusey, i, p.286. Note in Halevy, History, iii, p.155.

41 Quarterly Review, liii (February 1835), p.193n.

42 Times, 26 Nov. 1836.

43 Coningsby, Book ii, Ch. ii.

Apostasy[44] from the pulpit of the University Church of Oxford. On September 9th of the same year the first "Tract for the Times" appeared. In it Newman asked the question "in what are we to rest our authority, when the State deserts us?" and gave an answer which promised trouble for the Wesleyans, "I fear we have neglected the real ground on which our authority is built, - OUR APOSTOLICAL DESCENT."[45] The Church had begun to defend itself on grounds which were sure to alienate the Methodists. The Oxford Movement was supporting the Church theologically, and for its own sake, the Methodists were using the Church as a means to an end: the ultimate overthrow of Popery.

The Church's attitude to Methodism was ambivalent. Theologically the Evangelicals and High Churchmen had little sympathy for the Wesleyans, but politically the Anglicans could not afford to ignore the friendship of a denomination which was numerically stronger than the rest of Dissent put together.[46]

1835, hailed by the Methodist Magazine as the "third centenary of the printing of the entire Scriptures in English"[47] began with Gideon Ouseley threatening to tour Lancashire and Yorkshire to refute Popery single-handed;[48] with the Tories apparently dominant in the Wesleyan

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44 National Apostasy considered in a Sermon preached in St. Mary's Oxford, before His Majesty's Judges of Assize on Sunday, July 14th 1833, by John Keble, (Oxford 1833).

45 Tracts for the Times by members of the University of Oxford 9 Sept. 1833 (ad Clerum). In English Historical Documents, xii, p.339.

46 See the "Survey of Religious Affiliations" carried out by the Evangelical Magazine in 1836, The Census Report of 1851-53 on Religious Worship and K.S. Inglis, "Patterns of Religious Worship in 1851", Journal of Ecclesiastical History, xi (1860), pp.74-86.

47 Wesleyan Methodist Magazine (1835), p.801.

48 Ouseley wrote to Elijah Hoole on 10 Oct. 1834 stating: "When in Galway the Agent of the English Reformation Society there showed me a new map exhibiting the rapid progress of Popery thro various parts of England and Scotland too! It made my heart sick

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Conference; with Peel as Premier and with the Watchman ready to print. Within two months the political situation had become much worse. On February 18th the famous meeting of Whigs, Radicals and Irish took place at Lichfield House. Initially the three parties only agreed to vote against Manners Sutton in favour of Abercromby for the Speakership, but the alliance was strengthened by the single-minded desire to remove Peel from office. The two leading figures in this "Lichfield House Compact", described by the Watchman as the "Lichfield House Conspiracy",[49] were Lord John Russell and Daniel O'Connell. The Methodist antipathy to O'Connell was obvious and has already been mentioned but Russell was equally a Methodist anti-hero.

Russell's Memoirs of the Affairs of Europe from the Peace of Utrecht (London 1824-29) include a very unflattering section on Methodism. He discussed some of the weaknesses in Wesley's theology and emphasised the transitory nature of Methodism:

> "It resembled some very powerful drug, which suddenly obtains a reputation in physic, and is renowned for the wonderful cures which it performs; but presently the efficacy of the remedy ceases, and many of the cured either relapse, or fall into some new and incurable disease." [50]

The Methodists had not long to wait for revenge. After the death of George IV in June 1830, Russell contested an election at Bedford. His

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48 to behold it. It again forcibly struck me that I ought, while yet my strength remains, and seeing I know so much of this desolating imposture; to spend two or three months this year, this Winter or Spring probably, in visiting those parts of England - viz. Lancashire, Yorkshire, etc. where it is most prevalent." M.M.H. MSS.

49 Watchman, 4 Jan. 1840.

50 J. Russell, Memoirs of the Affairs of Europe from the Peace of Utrecht, 2 Vols. (London 1824-29). ii, p.584.

opponent published some of Russell's passages on Methodism from the Memoirs.[51] A Methodist preacher accused Russell of slander during the campaign,[52] and Bunting wrote a letter about the election,[53] so high was feeling running between Russell and the Wesleyans. Russell lost the election by only one vote and blamed the Methodists for his defeat.[54] The story had a strange sequel, because Robert Newton, travelling incognito, went down to Tavistock to stir up Methodist opposition to Russell in the family's pocket borough.[55] As strong supporter of Catholic Emancipation now in favour of expropriating the Irish Church, Russell was second only to O'Connell as the bête noir of the Wesleyan Tories, and the Lichfield House Compact was an unfortunate beginning to the Watchman's aims of moderation and non-partisan comment.

The parliamentary session opened badly for the conservatives when Abercromby defeated Manners Sutton in the contest for the Speakership. Peel bravely fought through some other early defeats, but the crucial issue was to be the Irish Church question. On March 27th Russell announced his intention of moving "that the House should resolve itself into a Committee, for the purpose of taking into consideration the expediency of applying any of the surplus revenues of the Church of Ireland... to the religious and moral instruction of all classes of the community."[56] Russell had chosen an issue which would unite Whigs,

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51 J. Prest, Lord John Russell (1972), p.37.

52 Times, 1 May 1835.

53 Gregory op.cit., p.202.

54 See Gregory p. 202 and D.N.B.

55 Gregory, op.cit., p.202.

56 Hansard, 3rd Ser., xxvii, 313.

Liberals, Dissenters and O'Connell's Irish party. The Watchman had no difficulty in taking sides:

> "At a period of so much peril to the Irish Church as the present, we gladly avail ourselves of every fair occasion to bring forward its claims to public sympathy and regard." [57]

> "... what other denomination has taken equal pains with the Wesleyan Conference to rid itself of the elements of active hostility to the Established Church? What other denomination has so deeply sympathised with the persecuted Irish branch of it."[58]

The Wesleyans were not only opposed to appropriation but also the beneficiary of this surplus revenue, the Irish national education system. Peel suffered defeats on the 3rd, 6th and 7th of April and the following day he resigned after only being in office for exactly 120 days. "The fatal appropriation clause" forced Peel to retire "with unsullied reputation and undamaged principles."[59] Once again the Wesleyans had an opportunity for revenge when Russell offered himself as a candidate for South Devonshire. Methodist opposition was strongly reinforced by the Whig, O'Connellite alliance. A Methodist minister wrote to the Times to say that the issue at Bedford in 1830 had been one of slander, as Russell "had not then proclaimed himself to be the ally of the Papists and the foe of the Protestants. He had not then taken for his bosom friend the most supple Jesuit and the paid blackguard of the Irish nation."[60] The letter appealed to the Methodists of South Devonshire not to vote for Russell. Lord John was defeated by 627 votes, so clearly the Methodists were not solely responsible for this set-back, but in the words of the Brighton Gazette they "contributed materially

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57 Watchman, 8 July 1835.

58 Watchman, 18 Nov. 1835.

59 Watchman, 6 Jan. 1835.

60 Times, 1 May 1835.

to the ejection from South Devonshire of the unworthy Minister."[61]

Russell soon found another seat at Stroud, and the Irish Church question was far from over. A church and tithe bill embodying the principle of appropriation was hastily drawn up after the commission of inquiry had published its report. When the Bill went into committee on 21st July, Peel moved an instruction dividing the Bill into two, so that appropriation could be considered as a separate measure. In a masterful speech, Peel argued that there was no surplus revenue and then put two possible courses of action to the Government: either to reorganise the revenues of the Irish Church so as to meet its legitimate needs or to establish Catholicism in Ireland.[62] He stated that the present policy of the Government was "simulated protection, but real hostility."[63] The Watchman was euphoric about the speech: "His exertions could not be surpassed, if he confessedly acted from the impulse of a desire to atone for past error."[64] Peel's 'sin' of granting Catholic Emancipation was being forgotten in his exertions for the Church in the 1830s. The Whig Bill passed the Commons with a majority of thirty-seven but it met its inevitable defeat in the Lords; the revenues of the Irish Church were safe, at least for the present.

The administration's second Tithe Bill was introduced in April 1836. It was practically identical to the 1835 Bill except the theoretical surplus was much bigger. Once again it passed the Commons, with a majority of twenty-six on its third reading, only to be defeated

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61 Reproduced in the Times, 7 Nov. 1835.

62 Hansard, 3rd Ser., xxix, 821.

63 Ibid., 822.

64 Watchman, 29 July 1835.

in the Lords. Morpeth introduced his third Tithe Bill in May 1837 and only the death of William IV interrupted the annual ritual. The Watchman remained uncompromising in its opposition to appropriation, how could it be otherwise when it considered that "the cause of Protestantism itself in Ireland is, to a great extent, involved in the destinies of the Established Church of that country."[65] The fact that the Tithe Bills were passing through the Commons aided by the votes of O'Connell's Irish Party was particularly galling to the Methodists. In 1835 the Government's Bill was saved by the Irish vote, a fact not lost on the Watchman.[66] However, while the House of Lords remained obstinately opposed to the Government's Irish policies, the Wesleyans had little to fear.

Another facet of the Government's Irish policy which alarmed the Wesleyans was its desire to reform the municipal corporations. In 1833 a Select Committee had been set up to inquire into the state of these corporations. The resultant report was a scathing attack on the whole system. In 1835 there were over sixty corporate cities and boroughs,[67] and all but one were in protestant hands. For the most part, they were small, corrupt protestant oligarchies and no-one doubted that there was need for reform; the debate was over the terms. Perrin introduced a Bill on July 31st 1835 but it was too late in the session and the House of Lords was preoccupied with the English Municipal Reform Bill. This measure was important to Russell and O'Connell. Russell was increasingly

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65 Watchman, 1 March 1837.

66 Watchman, 1 March 1837.

67 J.C. Beckett states that there were 68. N. Gash in Sir Robert Peel (1972) estimated the number at 71 while Angus Macintyre in The Liberator states that there were only 60 still in operation.

convinced that Ireland should be governed according to the same principles as England and Scotland:

> "Sir, I know not why, if we conduct the Government of England according to the wishes of the people of England and if we conduct the government of Scotland according to the wishes of the people of Scotland - I know not why in Ireland the opinions and wishes of a small minority only should be consulted." [68]

For O'Connell also, Irish Municipal reform was the test of whether Ireland was ever to be given equality within the operation of the union. He had made corporation reform one of the terms for his continued support of the Whigs. Michael O'Loghlen, the Irish Solicitor-General introduced a Bill in 1836, practically identical to Perrin's a year before. This Bill proposed to set up a system of popularly elected corporations based on a £10 franchise in the larger and a £5 franchise in the smaller towns. The measure was reasonable in the abstract but its practical effect was to abolish the protestant corporations and replace them with Catholic ones.

Peel and the Watchman had to devise a possible alternative. N.Gash has put it succinctly: "It raised therefore the constant dilemma which dogged all Irish politics: how to apply rational and acceptable reforms to Irish institutions without destroying the Protestant ascendancy."[69] Peel's solution was to extinguish rather than reform the Irish corporations. The Bill passed the Commons, met with the expected opposition in the Lords and was so changed that the Government withdrew it. In 1837 the Lords used delaying tactics over Municipal Reform in an attempt to force the Government to bring forward a Tithe Bill without appropriation.

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68 Hansard, 3rd Ser., xlvii, 33. Quoted by Prest, op.cit., p.99.

69 N. Gash, Mr. Secretary Peel, p.144.

The Watchman's comments on Irish corporation reform are typical of Methodist attitudes to Ireland:

> "The whole question, as we think, lies almost within a nutshell. At first sight, the proposition appears very fair and plausible, that the inhabitants of one part of the empire should be permitted to enjoy the same rights and privileges as their fellow-subjects in general; and were the population of Ireland in similar circumstances with the people of England and Scotland, there could not be any question as to whether Ireland should not also have the same municipal institutions. This, however, is far from being the case; and the question, as it appears to us, simply resolves itself into this, - whether such a measure of Municipal Reform shall be given to Ireland, as shall strengthen the cause of Popery, and increase its influence in the legislature of the Empire." 70

O'Connell and Russell had both come to the conclusion that Ireland could no longer be governed on the old principle of preserving the Protestant Ascendancy. Of course Russell was not as radical as O'Connell, especially concerning the Irish Church, and he was certainly opposed to repeal. The Watchman on the other hand gave no thought to the practicalities of the Irish situation. Roman Catholicism was wrong per se, therefore no government measure which favoured that religion could be right even if it appeared reasonable. With this ultra-conservative attitude in a changing situation it is clear in the mid-1830s that even Peel could not satisfy the Wesleyan Tories. He had let them down (except Bunting) in 1829, and it seemed that he was sure to do so again. The mood of the Commons could no longer tolerate policies which belonged more to the eighteenth century.

The other measure opposed to the dual principles of the Watchman was the abolition of Church Rates. This measure was primarily devised to satisfy the Dissenters and was introduced by the Government in March

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70 Watchman, 12 Apr. 1837.

1837. The revenue from newly administered episcopal and cathedral property was to replace the old church rate. The government ran into difficulties over the Bill. only gaining a majority of twenty-three on the second reading and this was reduced to five in committee. This problem would not be solved for some time. The Watchman was true to its support of the Established Church: "the Government measure to do away with Church-rates", it declared "is not the substitution of a less objectionable mode of providing the public, and especially the poor, with the means of religious worship, but such a surrender of the right of a Christian State, by Parliamentary grants or otherwise, to support religion, as degrades the National Establishment of these realms to the rank and standing of a mere endowed corporation."[71]

The Watchman also realised that the majority for this measure was a "Roman Catholic majority."[72] In a vivid example of how the Watchman promoted its own brand of toryism by anti-catholicism, it asked those of its readers who supported the government measure if they were content to receive it from an Irish Roman Catholic majority.[73] The Buntingite newspaper was joined by the Wesleyan Methodist Magazine in its opposition to the Whigs.[74]

Once again there was a sequel to the story in the Conference of 1837. Before a vote of thanks to Bunting as the retiring President, Mr. Galland objected to Bunting's attendance at a meeting in Exeter Hall in support of church rates.[75] The resultant debate took a polemical turn

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71 Watchman, 8 Mar. 1837. See also 1 Mar. 1837.

72 Watchman, 22 Mar. 1837.

73 Ibid.

74 Wesleyan Methodist Magazine (1837), p.311.

75 Gregory, op.cit., p.230.

when Bunting described as 'incendiary' a letter which Galland had written to the Leeds Mercury. Dr. Hook, the vicar of Leeds had tried to show the illogicality of Wesleyan opposition to church rates. Galland's letter argued against this from his opposition to the principles of Establishment.[76] The debate in Conference was a renewal of the conflict between Bunting and Galland over the Methodist relationship to the Established Church, which had begun at the 1834 Conference. In the face of opposition Bunting took the same tack as before; he was following in the strict Wesleyan tradition:

> "I think the letter unwise and indiscreet. There are principles we are pledged to maintain; they are our property: they are Wesleyan. We do not insist on your agreeing with us in holding principles; but we must act upon our Wesleyan principles. Ours is the Wesleyan principle acknowledged." [77]

The Wesleyans might not have been politically united but Bunting was clearly dominant in Conference.[78]

Events on the political scene had virtually reached a stalemate with the Whigs unable to get their Irish measures through the House of Lords. This situation was changed in June 1837 when the King died and parliament dissolved. A general election was about to be fought. The three years of the Watchman's existence had been dominated by the Lichfield House Compact and its reverberations in Ireland. The government's Irish policies had passed through the Commons largely on the strength of O'Connell's faithful support. The Irish party had wielded a political influence disproportionate to its numerical strength. The Watchman looked upon the 1837 election as an opportunity to return a parliament more favourable to the protestant interest in Ireland.

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76 Ibid., p.241.

77 Ibid., p.238.

78 Ibid., p.251.

The golden days of the early nineteenth-century, when the evangelical group in the Commons was strong and Butterworth and Thompson could support Methodist interests, were over. Due to peculiar electoral circumstances, the passage of Catholic Emancipation and the activities of O'Connell's party had damaged Wesleyan interests more than they had expected. 1837 was an opportunity to turn the tide:

> "Religious Electors of Great Britain stand true to your principles! British Legislation was never more closely interwoven with the interests of Christianity, and, through that medium, never operated so extensively on the world at large, as at this momentous crisis of our history... It is for you to decide, whether Protestantism shall still be the polar star of our Senators...." 79

The English Wesleyan tories could always rely on the unanimous support of the Irish connexion. The efforts of the Irish Methodists were primarily directed against O'Connell's candidature in Dublin. At a meeting of the members of the Wesleyan Methodist Society,[80] possessing the elective franchise, several resolutions were adopted. They regretted the circumstances which had forced them to abandon their no-politics tradition and pledged themselves to support "Messrs. West and Hamilton", the Conservative candidates for Dublin. The Methodists were the toast of the Tory press in the city. The Dublin Record hailed them as "sturdy friends of Protestantism and social order."[81] The Watchman could not resist holding the Irish Methodists up as an example, because their obvious familiarity with Popery enabled them "better than

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79 Watchman, 19 July 1837.

80 The meeting was held on 29 July 1837 with J.O. Bonsall in the chair. Bonsall had been the printer for the Brunswick Constitutional Club in Dublin, in 1829. The resolutions were printed in the Dublin papers and then in the Watchman, 9 Aug. 1837.

81 Reproduced in the Watchman, 9 Aug. 1837.

Englishmen to appreciate its spirit and design."[82] Irish Methodism had helped develop Wesleyan anti-catholicism from Wesley to Butterworth, and was now invoked by the Methodist tories to stir up their English brethren. Coming up to 1829, Bunting had helped to contain the Irish connexion within the 'no-politics' rule. Now they were praised for having "broken through their habitual reserve", and "acted a prominent and noble part on the political stage."[83] Ten years before the Dublin Methodists would have been heavily censured for their action. Catholic pressure, particularly from O'Connell was modifying Wesleyan political attitudes. The efforts of the Dublin Methodists were in vain and O'Connell was duly elected.

The Wesleyan Tories failed again at Sheffield where two of the local preachers, S.D. Waddy and G.B. McDonald promoted the candidacy of Mr. Thornely. Thornely was defeated and the political activities of the two preachers were questioned at the Leeds Conference. Bunting stated that the two preachers were wrong "to speak in committees and meetings preparatory to nominations" but "not in having appeared upon the hustings in favour of a party candidate." Bunting had obviously abandoned the 'no-politics' rule because it was no longer to his advantage. This rule up to 1829 was a means of supporting conservatism, by the mid-1830s it could only operate to the benefit of the Whigs. Faced with this reversal in fortune the very able Dr. Bunting was forced to expound a more sophisticated principle. He stated that a Methodist preacher should have nothing to do with the "machinery" of an election but that Wesley himself had sanctioned interference in

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82 Ibid.

83 Ibid.

elections.[84] Bunting had a seemingly endless supply of Wesleyan precedents whenever he was in a tight corner.

The Wesleyan Tories fared no better at Leeds where the reformer Sir W. Molesworth was elected instead of the Tory Sir John Beckett. Obviously the Wesleyan Conference meeting in Leeds was not able to affect the election and the salt was rubbed in their wounds when Alderman Musgrave (a Wesleyan) proposed Molesworth.[85]

In Manchester the pattern was similar. Gowland has noticed three streams of political opinion in Manchester Wesleyanism.[86] The "Church and Tory" party was led by Wood who opposed the abolition of church rates, appropriation and Irish Municipal Reform, although he, like Bunting, had supported Catholic Emancipation.[87] Wood was defeated by J.R. Stephens in the 1837 election as Ashton-under-Lyne. Holland Hoole represented the Liberal Tories in Manchester. He was a Salford cotton spinner and a free trader but his relationships with the Leaguers were not very harmonious. George Chappell was a Whig businessman whose non-Wesleyan background produced an antipathy to Church and Tory Wesleyanism. In the 1832 election most of the Manchester Wesleyans voted for the Whig candidates. The Philips, Thornson alliance was the most popular for

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84 Gregory, op.cit., p.236.

85 W.R. Ward, Religion and Society in England 1790-1850, p.253.

86 See "Political opinion in Manchester Wesleyanism 1832-1857", in Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society, xxxvi (Feb. 1968), pp.93-104, and D.A. Cowland unpublished Ph.D. thesis op.cit. Also Ward op.cit., pp.253-254.

87 The Speech of James Wood at the Ashton-under-Lyne Conservative Banquet. Reported in the Manchester Chronicle and reproduced in the Watchman 15 Nov. 1837. Gowland erroneously assumed that all the Manchester Wesleyans were united in their opposition to Catholic Emancipation.

Methodists and non-Methodists, so the Wesleyans were reflecting the trends of the local situation. It was not until much later in the 1830s that the toryism of the Wesleyan Conference made a real impact on Manchester politics.

The prevailing toryism of a Bunting dominated conference and news organ was not reflected in the votes of the Wesleyan electorate. Except when the no-popery cry was raised fervently, as in Dublin in 1837 and Manchester in 1839, the Wesleyan electors were more guided by local politics than by the toryism of the preachers. Two letters to the Manchester Guardian in July 1837 by a Wesleyan, albeit a reformer help to explain this voting behaviour.[88] The anonymous writer stated that the majority of Wesleyan ministers did not meddle with politics, it just seemed that way because the tories talked "most and most loudly."[89] He admitted that there was a strong element of anti-catholicism in Wesleyanism "derived rather from the contemplation of its portraiture as existing in times of universal bigotry and intolerance, than from a candid observation of its modified form..."[90] He observed correctly that the tories hoped that this religious prejudice would array the Wesleyans in opposition to the Whigs because of their Irish policy. He stated that this hope was false because the Methodists and the Anglicans for that matter must use spiritual rather than political weapons in dealing with Ireland. The Roman Catholic population could not be kept in subjection by force or discrimination. In his second letter, he stated that the majority of Wesleyans were opposed to church rates and in favour of municipal reform.

88 They were formed into a pamphlet entitled How will Wesleyan Electors Vote? (Manchester, 1837) 24pp.

89 Ibid., p.4.

90 Ibid.

In the conclusion to the first letter the writer asked and answered a pertinent question:

> "... if the Methodists are for the most part Liberals, why do they suffer the Watchman to go forth as their organ and thus misrepresent them? The answer is simple. That journal is taken by us chiefly on account of the Methodistic news it contains from all parts of the world." 91

These letters were not written by a neutral, but appear reasonable. The Wesleyans were undeniably anti-catholic, but English Catholicism was very different from its Irish counterpart. It was not numerically strong nor politically threatening outside the great centres of Irish population in Liverpool, Preston, Manchester and London, and the government's liberal policies in Ireland were irrelevant to most Wesleyans. Take away the need for a bulwark against Popery, and why else should the Wesleyans support the Established Church? In practice, they too suffered the grievances common to all dissenters. It was nearly fifty years since their founder had died within the pale of the Church of England; a great deal had changed since then. Wesleyan Toryism was based upon sympathy for the Irish connexion, a pervading anti-catholicism and Bunting's supremacy in the English Conference. In the regions where Ireland and Catholicism were not issues and where the preacher was not a Buntingite then other political determinants could take over. The Wesleyan Chronicle in 1841 produced a table indicating that out of a total of 1,843 Wesleyan voters in the survey 1,370 voted Liberal.[92] The Chronicle was a specifically Liberal Wesleyan newspaper[93] so its findings are open to query. However, while the figures may be

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91 Ibid., p.14.

92 The Political Sentiments of Wesleyans, Wesleyan Chronicle. Quoted by J.R. Vincent, Pollbooks, How Victorians Voted (1967), pp.69-70.

93 R. Currie, Methodism Divided (1968), p.67.

exaggerated there is no reason to believe that the results were substantially wrong.

The myth that Church and State Toryism reflected the political attitudes of all Wesleyan Methodists grew up for a variety of reasons. The first was given by the writer of the letters to the Manchester Guardian. Bunting's talents had raised him to a position of supremacy in the Conference and "this gentleman, and a few other influential preachers, are avowed admirers of the Peel and Stanley policy."[94] By skilfully citing Wesley as his authority Bunting tried to place Wesleyan Toryism firmly within the Wesleyan tradition; his job was not too difficult and it was hallowed by Wesley's name.

The second reason stems from the extremely cohesive nature of the Connexional system and the role played in that system by the preacher. The "Wesleyan preachers, deriving corporate authority and a strong sense of group identity from the connexional principle, clearly were in a strong position to influence the development of the movement and the evolution of their own role within it."[95] This tendency towards "professionalism and institutional order" was more advanced than in the dissenting groups in the 1830s. Consequently one could easily draw the conclusion, (and many did), that the political opinions of the Wesleyan Conference and its committees represented the authentic attitudes of British Methodists.

A third factor was the influence of the Watchman. By 1837 it was averaging a circulation of 3,153 for each publication rising to 3,707 in 1839.[96] Aside from its political orientation it served as a

94 How will Wesleyan Electors Vote?, p.5.
95 A.D. Gilbert, Religion and Society in Industrial England: church, chapel and social change 1740-1914, p.151.
96 These calculations appeared in the Watchman and were based on the Parliamentary return on stamps. Watchman 20 Sept. 1837 and 22 May 1839.

connexional news organ. Its neo-official status and its wealthy backing ensured a big lead over potential rivals. The Circular, Lantern, Wesleyan Chronicle and Wesleyan and Christian Record were all started to give an alternative viewpoint and they all failed. It was not until 1839 when the Wesleyan Times appeared that the Watchman had a serious rival.[97] The Watchman virtually had the field to itself, especially in the 1830s. Bunting's scrap with the Wesleyan Methodist Magazine over Irish education ensured that it would follow meekly.

A fourth factor was the influence of the Times. At the end of 1835 it launched a campaign against O'Connell and his party.[98] It was particularly critical of the government's Irish policy and as such was taking a line substantially the same as the Watchman. The Times eulogised the Methodists in its own articles[99] and in reprints from other newspapers,[100] and occasionally published articles from the Watchman.[101] This identity of interests with England's leading newspaper could not fail to strengthen the Wesleyan-Tory connection. Coming up to the Wesleyan centenary the Methodists had, in the eyes of the Times, become a "respectable body of Christians."[102]

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97 Currie, op.cit., p.67.

98 Macintyre, op.cit., p.238.

99 Times, 26 Nov. 1836, 14 June 1839, 20 July 1839.

100 Times, 7 Nov. 1835, 3 Aug. 1837, 11 Nov. 1838.

101 Times, 14 July 1836, 23 May 1839.

102 Times, 11 Nov. 1838.

The reality was very different from the myth. The Wesleyan Tories had not galvanised the Wesleyan electorate, although the political position in the country was a little more hopeful because of the Conservative successes in the English counties. It was estimated that the government majority had been reduced from 58 to no more than 32.[103] Melbourne and Russell blamed the poor law for the ministry's poor showing but the alliance with O'Connell certainly did not help. Once again the Whigs were dependent on the Irish party to remain in office. The Watchman optimistically hoped for a coalition ministry excluding O'Connell who would "like another Jonah, be unceremoniously thrown overboard."[104] Its hopes were disappointed, the Whigs must carry on even in a difficult situation.

The great controversies of the 1834-37 period, tithes and Irish Municipal Reform, were settled. Russell was forced to abandon appropriation and the Act of 1838 was concerned only with the method of assessment and collection. Peel's only concession was that the arrears of tithe were to be cancelled. The Church was safe and the Lords duly passed the measure which even Peel could vote for. Municipal reform had to wait until 1840 but before that another major issue had loomed on the horizon, the Whig educational proposals.

From hindsight it seems that the Wesleyan Tories were suspending the real interest of Methodism, in proclaiming the Gospel, in favour of political action. They did not see it that way. They considered that the major battle was with Roman Catholicism not paganism. To engage in political opposition to Catholicism did not hinder the Gospel,

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103 Gash op.cit., p.195.

104 Watchman, 16 Aug. 1837.

rather it helped keep error in check. The Watchman, reporting on the "May Meetings" of 1836 stated that "the political struggle, in which we are engaged, so far from obstructing the cause of Christian missions, seems rather to have given a new impulse to it."[105]

The Methodists had reason for their optimism. Up to the end of the 1830s Methodist membership was expanding more rapidly than the total adult population.[106] However the more politically oriented Wesleyans were not doing as well as the revivalistic primitives. In 1840 the relative numerical strength of Methodism within English society was greater than at any other time; coincidentally this was the period when the government attempted to tackle the intricate pathways of National Education.

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105 Watchman, 18 May 1836.

106 Gilbert, op.cit., pp.30-32.

VII

METHODISM AND THE 1839 EDUCATIONAL PROPOSALS

> "But there are other objections to the system besides the principle of permanent limitation in the use of the Scriptures, a principle, which differs widely from that of the British and Foreign School Society, and other kindred institutions, in which the principle of selection is preparatory to and contemplates the eventual surrender of the entire sacred volume to its readers. The Bishop of Exeter is prepared to prove for example, that from some of the schools even the selections of scripture have been rejected with scorn by the Roman Catholic clergy... Can we wonder that the Protestants of Ireland are dissatisfied with a system like this?"
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> The Watchman on Irish National Education 1836 [1]

> "Should Popery and infidelity ever attempt under any pretence, to take the direction of the youthful mind of this country, it is to be hoped that Methodism will resist the attempt, even to the death."
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> Wesleyan Education Report 1837 [2]

Bunting's antagonism to Irish National Education in 1832 was pressed home by the Watchman[3] in the 1830s, and was rapidly developing into a connexional orthodoxy. The objections were still the same; that selections from the scriptures instead of the whole Bible were made available; that state funds were used to educate Roman Catholics; and that separate religious instruction raised up a barrier to proselytism.

Methodist opposition to this system was sharpened in the 1830s by a number of factors. Irish education had effectively become denominational and was administered by clerical managers. This distortion of

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1 Watchman, 23 Mar. 1836.

2 Presented by Richard Treffry, William Altherton and Samuel Jackson to the Leeds Conference in 1837.

3 Watchman, 15 May 1835; 16 Sept. 1835; 4 Nov. 1835; 23 Mar. 1836; 5 Oct. 1836; 1 Feb. 1837; 15 Feb. 1837; 1 Mar. 1837; 20 Dec. 1837; 6 June 1838.

the original aim was due partly to the commissioners and partly to the withdrawal of the Protestant denominations. The Catholic Church took full advantage of its numerical superiority and the Methodists began to equate national education with Catholic supremacy.[4] Salt was rubbed into Wesleyan wounds when some of the Catholic Bishops expressed dissatisfaction with the Irish scheme in the late 1830s. The Catholic hierarchy had supported the new system at the outset because it offered a check to the Protestant proselytising societies. In any case the Roman Catholics had been in the educational wilderness for so long that any concession was worth grasping. There had been one dissident voice in 1832. John MacHale, Bishop of Killala and later Archbishop of Tuam stated that "it is a great mistake to imagine that because it is disliked by the abettors of the old proselytizing spirit, it should on that account alone be hailed by catholics..."[5]

MacHale restrained his objections until 1837 when he wrote a series of letters to Lord John Russell in the Dublin papers. He particularly objected to the power given to the commissioners in the selection of books for religious education. He stated firmly "that to no authority on earth save the Pope shall I submit the books from which the children of my diocese shall derive their religious instruction."[6] MacHale inevitably came into conflict with Murray, the Archbishop of Dublin who sat on the board of education. A controversy raged in the Dublin press throughout 1838 and the dispute was eventually submitted to Rome. The heat was not taken out of the debate until 1841, but with

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4 Daniel McAfee to Daniel O'Connell Esq. M.P. (1839), 64 pp.

5 Quoted by Akenson, The Irish Education Experiment (1970), p.206.

6 Ibid., p.208.

the exception of the archdiocese of Tuam, where MacHale created his own system of schools, Catholic support for the national system continued unimpaired.

The Wesleyans were astonished that a Catholic Archbishop could be dissatisfied with a system which they already considered to be too "Popish". James Dixon, a Bunting supporter and an ultra-Protestant, delivered a lecture at Sheffield, York, Manchester, Birmingham, Barnsley and Bradford stating that

> "any one at all conversant with this system would imagine it to be sufficiently Popish... and yet this is not sufficient to satisfy the cravings of the Popish Church... This is not all. To complete the case, it is understood that Dr. MacHale has appealed to the Pope from the authority of the State; so that his Holiness is brought in to decide whether the Three Estates of this realm have the right to establish, and, to a very limited extent indeed, direct even a pro-Popish system of education in this country." [7]

Once again pressure from the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland pushed Wesleyanism into Toryism and strengthened Bunting's hand in the Conference. Irish National Education had prepared Methodist attitudes long before a similar scheme could be introduced in England. The first sign of danger came in Liverpool when the Liberals introduced the "Irish System" into two corporation schools in 1836.[8] Hugh McNeile, an Evangelical Anglican clergyman from Ulster, raised the no-popery cry by claiming that the Bible was excluded from the schools. The Watchman interpreted events in Liverpool as showing that the scene of battle was moving from Ireland to England:

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7 James Dixon, The Present Position and Aspects of Popery and the duty of Exposing the Errors of Papal Rome. A lecture first delivered in Sheffield, 12 Dec. 1839. (London, 1840). 53 pp.

8 J. Murphy, Church, State and Schools in Britain, 1800-1970 (1971), pp.18-19.

> "Recent events in Liverpool show, that the mischief does not end there [Ireland] , but threatens to co-operate with other influences, in supplanting the Protestantism of England." 9

The Wesleyans realised that they could not criticise the educational efforts of others without attempting some activity on their own account. The 1836 Conference appointed a small sub-committee "for the purpose of ascertaining the actual state of education in immediate connexion with Methodism throughout Great Britain."[10] The resultant report is a mine of information about Methodist educational activity in the early nineteenth century. There were 3,339 Sunday schools with 341,442 scholars, nine daily infant schools and twenty-two week-day schools.[11] The report called for a more extensive effort to set up Wesleyan daily schools. The reporters suggested only a small financial commitment in case the Government should take up the subject of national education. It appears at this stage that the Methodists still hoped for financial help from the Government. However, they were already defining their aims very narrowly:

> "What we wish for is, not merely Schools, but Church Schools, which, being systematically visited by the Preachers, may prove doors of entrance into the Church of God." 12

The Wesleyans wanted to tie their educational activities closely to the broader ministry of the Church, a sectarian aim which could pose problems for an all-embracing government measure. A more permanent Wesleyan Committee of Education was established by the Conference in 1838; Jabez Bunting, Thomas Jackson, John Scott, George Cubitt, Edmund Grindrod and Richard Treffry were the major figures on the committee.

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9 Watchman, 5 Oct. 1836.

10 Conference Minutes (1836).

11 Wesleyan Education Reports (1837).

12 Ibid., p.8.

Bunting's policies and 'Bunting's men' were in the Methodist educational vanguard from 1838 onwards.

There were already problems awaiting the Wesleyans. In 1836 the Central Society of Education was founded under the chairmanship of Sir Thomas Wyse, who had contributed to the Irish system in 1831. The society advocated a national system of schools with democratic control and state inspectors. In the same year Wyse produced a pamphlet entitled Education Reform: or the necessity of a national system of education. Wyse took his campaign a stage further on June 14th, 1838, when he moved in the Commons

> "an address to her Majesty that she will be graciously pleased to appoint a board of Commissioners of Education in England, with the view, especially, of providing for the wise, equitable, and efficient application of sums granted, or to be granted, for the advancement of education by Parliament, and for the immediate establishment of schools for the education of teachers in accord with the intention already expressed by the Legislature." [13]

In a poorly attended division, Wyse only lost his motion by four votes, (74 - 70). The Watchman made one of its most memorable comments on this victory:

> "Will Christian England look quietly on and see an Irish Romanist, supported by such men as Mr. Hume defraud us of our religion under the pretext of teaching us arithmetic..." [14]

Wyse's motion was defeated but the battle was far from over because the Government under Russell's initiative was considering educational reform. After the general election of 1837, Russell and Brougham devised a scheme of erecting education boards throughout the country. However, the time was not right, as the cabinet was still content to work through the two voluntary societies which had been given

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13 Hansard, 3rd Ser. xliii, 710-711.

14 Watchman, 20 June 1838.

annual grants from 1833. At the end of November 1838 Russell took charge of the government's educational plans and he was known to favour a greater measure of state involvement.

While the government was contemplating a scheme of national education, Bunting was already defining his principles in response to it. He wrote to Thomas Binney that:

> "I deeply feel with you that 'the subject of National Education is one of great importance, but of great difficulty', and that 'badly done, it had better not be touched'. My present impression is, that, if done at all, in the present posture of affairs, it will be done badly. I therefore incline to wish that it may not just now be attempted, especially as I have many fears from the appointment of any such Central Board, as I can hope to see constituted. I do not see any great necessity for the abandonment of the present plan while it is liberally administered, that of distributing Parliamentary aid by the Executive Government to Schools of all Denominations, where certified as deserving of such aid by either of the two Great Educational Societies already in operation. I think, however, that the same facilities of recommendation should be extended to other recognised Bodies, besides the National Society and the British and Foreign School Society; and that such an extension is very practicable, and would stimulate, not discourage, the Voluntary exertions of all Classes of Christians." [15]

Bunting was quite happy with the situation as it stood except that the Wesleyans were not getting any money, and he realised that the Methodists could not afford to build up an effective educational system without government aid. The present system needed to be broadened, but not too far, lest Roman Catholics and other undesirables should be helped as well. He wanted part of the cake which the Church and Dissenters were already eating but he did not want to share it out any further. Bunting realised that he was unlikely to get those terms from the Whigs, especially with Wyse and O'Connell supporting them, so he preferred to wait.

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15 M.C.A. MSS. Copy. Jabez Bunting to Thomas Binney, 5 Apr. 1838. Ward, Early Victorian Methodism, pp.202-203.

By the beginning of 1839 the Wesleyans' opposition to Roman Catholicism had driven them into a very tight corner. A united system based on the Irish model was unsatisfactory but so too was any scheme which favoured the Church of England, because of the advance of the Oxford Movement. The horse they had bet on throughout the 1830s was no longer a thoroughbred. Even before Russell outlined his proposals in 1839 the Watchman realised that to all intents and purposes the Wesleyans were isolated. What security had they that a system of diocesan education would represent "true churchism" and not "Puseyism"?[16] On the other hand they considered the religious instruction given by the British and Foreign School Society to be inadequate.[17] Overlying both these objections was the fear of any state scheme favouring the Roman Catholic Church. Where else was there to turn except inwards?

On February 12th, 1839, Russell outlined the Government proposals to the House. After declaring the obvious need for more education in the country, he stated that the Irish scheme had been a success in a more testing environment than in England. He said that the "Government had been unable either to adopt a general plan of education, on which could be founded new schools for education throughout the country, to which both clergymen and Dissenters might subscribe, and had also been unable to give their adhesion to the system lately propounded, that the Church, and the Church alone, should conduct the education of the country."[18] He suggested the creation of an educational board composed of Privy Councillors and responsible to Parliament. This board was to distribute an increased government grant according to the "objects

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16 Watchman, 6 Feb. 1839.

17 Ibid.

18 Hansard, 3rd Ser. xlv.

proposed". Russell also desired the establishment of a good normal school for religious instruction, general education, moral training and habits of industry.

Russell was attempting to steer a middle course between Church and Dissent while giving the State a greater measure of control. Under this scheme the Church would lose its position of privilege and education would become more secular. Although the plan was not fully explicit at this stage, the principles behind it were clear. The Watchman at once nailed its colours to the mast:[19]

> "It is far safer for our institutions, and a policy far more magnanimous and worthy of a Protestant people, that the voluntary principle shall alone be confided in, and every denomination of Christians be left at liberty to educate their own youth in their own principles. Who amongst us would not cheerfully forego Government grants in aid of education, if thereby Roman Catholic ambition, left to its own unassisted resources, shall be baulked of its contemplated prey". [20]

The Watchman in fact had gone one step further than Bunting in his letter to Binney. It was prepared to take the logical conclusion that if the Wesleyans wanted to stop grants to Roman Catholicism then they would have to sacrifice their own grant. This attitude indicates the strength of anti-catholic prejudice, or principle, of the Methodists who were numerically far stronger than the English Roman Catholics and therefore stood to gain more. The Watchman paralleled its chosen voluntaryism with the enforced voluntaryism of the protestant educational societies in Ireland, particularly the London Hibernian Society.[21]

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19 H.F. Mathews in Methodism and the Education of the People (1949), argues for an evolutionary process in the Watchman's comments. He has ignored the long history of Wesleyan opposition to Roman Catholicism in educational affairs which enabled the Watchman to state its position immediately.

20 Watchman, 20 Feb. 1839.

21 Watchman 27 Feb. 1839. It cited as its allies Rev. Dr. Cooke, Rev. Baptist Noel and Sergeant Jackson.

Perhaps it is not surprising that the first opposition speech to Russell's proposals was made by Mr Sergeant Jackson,[22] an enthusiastic member of that very society. Jackson, predictably, attacked Russell's first premise, that the Irish system had been a success.

Russell's proposals were made more explicit in a "Minute of Proceedings of a Committee of Privy Council on Education" printed on April 10th, 1839. Clearly the scheme would have to come before the Commons for extended debate. Thomas Allan, the old campaigner against Catholic Emancipation noticed in the Times that Russell had fixed Friday 31st May for the debate,[23] and suggested to Thomas Jackson, the Methodist President that the Committee of Privileges be convened as soon as possible. Allan stated that "the scheme will subject a great part of the youth of the nation to its [The Roman Catholic Church] influence and make them papists." However, times had changed since Allan and Butterworth had brought Irish affairs to the forefront of the Methodist metropolitan committees. On this occasion action was already under way. The annual meeting of the Wesleyan ministers of the London District (about 80) had already considered the Privy Council minute and had given the newly appointed Education Committee the task "of watching over the rights and interests of our Societies, as they may be involved in any legislative or other proceedings on the question of National Education". Jackson told Allan what was happening, but the peripheral position of the layman and the influence of the new ministerial education committee, are almost symbolic of the course of Wesleyanism. There can be no doubt that it was Bunting who was guiding

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22 Hansard 3rd Ser. xlv.

23 M.C.A. MSS. Allan Collection. Thomas Allan to Thomas Jackson 17 May 1839, and Thomas Jackson to Thomas Allan, 18 May 1839. Also, Thomas Allan to Thomas Jackson, 6 Aug. 1838.

the Methodist opposition. Thomas Jackson, the President, was in the peculiarly embarrassing position of having given support to the Irish measure in 1832.

The Education Committee, the London ministers and the committee of Privileges met on May 21st with Jackson in the chair. Eight resolutions were passed expressing the grounds of Methodist opposition. It was resolved that the scheme was in violation of the Protestant Constitution "inasmuch as it contemplates the training and employment by the State, of Romish (among other) Teachers, and particularly recognises the corrupted Romish translations of the Holy Scriptures..."[24] Bunting moved that "any attempt to instruct, in the same school, the children of the poorer classes by teaching adapted to every prevailing variety of religious belief or opinion, will, ... be found impracticable; and even if practicable... could only lead to perpetual collision and inconvenience, and would, in many instances, produce among the children so incongruously mingled together, a dangerous spirit of scepticism and unbelief."[25]

The Wesleyans were unwilling to give up their distinctive educational principles and they were not prepared to tolerate any concession to Rome. On this occasion their opposition was to be more than mere talk; a standardised petition was to be drawn up and sent to all the Wesleyan

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24 Second Resolution moved by Thomas Farmer and seconded by Humphrey Sandwith (it was he who contributed the article on Lord John Russell to the Wesleyan Methodist Magazine in 1830).

25 Fourth Resolution moved by Dr. Bunting and seconded by Richard Matthews.

congregations.[26] The time was short. They thought that there were only ten days until the Commons debate, but the Wesleyans had, in the connexional system, a ready-made base for organised protest. The petition was sent out to all the Wesleyan congregations with an accompanying letter containing quotations from the "accredited Romish Version".

The Wesleyan protest was under way but the politically aware among the Methodists realised that in the coming debate the attitude adopted by the Established Church would be crucial for the scheme's eventual acceptance or rejection. Thomas Allan communicated this to William Dealtry, a well-known Evangelical who succeeded John Knox as rector of Clapham in 1813.[27] Allan had probably come into contact with Dealtry through the British and Foreign Bible Society which the Anglican Evangelical had supported in the difficult years 1810-12. Allan wrote, "I see little substantial opposition by the Church. Is it infatuated?"[28] Dealtry replied that he was glad to hear "that the subject has been taken up with such zeal by the Methodists. They have set us an admirable example: and if the proposed measure be arrested at all, they will have contributed in no mean degree to that important end."

On June 3rd another minute of the Privy Council indicated that the Government had been forced to modify its original proposals. The Normal School project had been dropped, so too was the proposal to allow

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26 See Appendix 1 for the wording of the Petition. The petition was drawn up by Bunting. T.P. Bunting, The Life of Jabez Bunting, ii, p.313.

27 D.N.B.

28 M.C.A. MSS. Allan Collection, Thomas Allan to William Dealtry 27 May 1839 and reply.

different versions of the Scriptures.[29] The latest plan was a partial reversion to the previous system of supporting the two educational societies but the new Committee of Privy Council was to stay and other groups could make application for Government aid. The Wesleyans would be in a strong position to make this application but their objections were not to be bought off.

On June 10th Bunting, armed with a copy of the new proposals, delivered an important speech in London outlining his policy.[30] He stated that the Government's new scheme "neutralises all the advantage which it might have been supposed we should have gained from this concession, and they propose to divide the instruction given to the children of the poor into "general" and "special" - a difference which, if it means anything, certainly means something very mischievous and injurious."[31] He was opposed to state intervention either by the new Committee of Privy Council or by a system of school inspection. He believed that education should be the task of the Christian denominations. He too was afraid of indiscriminate government grants which could go to "schools in which the errors, the superstitions, and the idolatries of Popery will be inculcated."[32] Bunting's principles were

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29 See Speech by Edward Baines. Hansard 3rd Ser. xlviii, 747-752.

30 Speech of the Rev. Dr. Bunting delivered in London, on Monday, June 10th, 1839 in reference to the Government Scheme of National Education recently abandoned and to the Government New Scheme just proposed (Manchester 1839), 16 pp. See also I.D. Cleland, The Development of Wesleyan Methodist Principles and Ideas 1791-1914, University of Nottingham, M.Phil. thesis (1970). Cleland states that Bunting made this speech in Manchester but this could not be so since Bunting was attending the meeting of the United Committee of Wesleyan Methodists in London on June 10th and June 12th.

31 Dr. Bunting, op.cit., p.5.

32 Ibid., p.9.

essentially those which he had expressed to Binney a year earlier: Government grants to all orthodox Protestant bodies and no state interference in education. In the nature of politics in the late 1830s no administration could reasonably accede to these demands; radical and Catholic pressure had done its job. Bunting ended his speech with the traditional denial that the Methodists were playing politics:

> "It is true, such is the state of affairs in the country at the present time, that our opposition to what we considered an anti-religious measure, may have a political effect. But our fire is directed exclusively against the latitudinarian and popish tendencies of this scheme of education; and if any political party in the country choose to place themselves between our fire and the object at which it is really directed, that is their affair - not ours." 33

Bunting had the amazing knack of appearing to support his former principles even when he had abandoned them. He demonstrated this technique often in Conference, and it is no wonder his opponents found him difficult to pin down. However, once again he could point to a Wesleyan precedent; had not John Wesley stated that no education at all was preferable to a less than truly religious one?

This speech was delivered on June 10th. The United Committees also met then but adjourned until June 12th. On June 11th Thomas Allan wrote a strongly worded letter to Bunting stating that on the following evening much would depend on Bunting's opinions and recommendations because of his influence among the preachers. He supported the basic principles of Bunting's opposition but "In addition... I am satisfied we must gravely consider whether we must distinctly take the ground that we renounce all assistance from the Government and insist upon our objection

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33 Ibid., p.14., also Watchman, 29 May 1839 in reply to the Patriot's accusation that the Wesleyans were augmenting the conservative opposition to the plan.

to the state being the regulator of the education of the population or disposers of the funds of the country in support of popery."[34]

The following evening the United Committees of the Wesleyan Methodists met again and adopted a series of resolutions.[35] They objected to the minute of June 3rd because the Government still maintained a preference for the April 10th proposals and had not completely abandoned them. They had simply put them into cold storage because of the strength of the opposition. But the Methodists did not like the new measures any better. They were not opposed to increased Government aid but it should only be given to schools prepared to use the Authorised Version thereby excluding the Roman Catholics. Surely it was unreasonable, they contended, for the State to tax Protestants to support Catholic schools. They were equally opposed to the control given to the Privy Council Committee and to State inspection "in matters religious and moral". The new scheme aimed at conformity while the Methodists desired to retain the distinctiveness of their educational principles. After all that was why they had not joined the British and Foreign School Society in the first place.

Bunting's policies had carried the day and the Wesleyans still hoped, in spite of the conclusions of Allan and the Watchman, that they might be able to get State aid on their own terms. The tortuous logic of the Methodist position was exposed by Edward Baines, the editor of the Leeds Mercury, in a letter to Bunting's son:

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34 M.C.A. MSS. Allan Collection. Thomas Allan to Jabez Bunting 11 June 1839.

35 Appendix 2.

"It clearly implies that the Wesleyans, in as much as they 'pay' to the support of the School Societies assisted by Government, have as much right as the Church to have their catechism used in those schools. Now we turned this position against your father... by showing that it was just as cogent for Roman Catholics as for Wesleyans; and yet he maintained that the former ought to receive no 'public aid' whatever." 36

Nevertheless, the Methodists had committed themselves to opposing the Government proposals as strongly as possible. The centralised Metropolitan committees, of Education and Privileges, had worked efficiently in drawing up resolutions and instigating widespread petitioning. The Watchman continued to publish anti- National Education articles.[37] Speeches were made and pamphlets produced,[38] and even Parliamentary representatives were contacted.[39] Wesleyan Methodism had taken on all the characteristics of a powerful extra-parliamentary pressure group with its centralised committee, press organ, extensive regional organisation and use of petitioning.

However, the measure was to be settled in Parliament and on June 14th Russell moved that the House should go into a Committee of Supply. Stanley opened the debate by mentioning the vast petitioning against the proposals. He stated that the Established Church was opposed to the Government and so too was the next "most important" and "most numerous" denomination in the country, the Wesleyan Methodists.[40] The

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36 Edward Baines to Jabez Bunting Jnr. June 19th, 1839. Quoted by Ward, op.cit., p.246.

37 Watchman, 22 May 1839; 29 May 1839.

38 In addition to Bunting see George Osborn, No Popery in Schools Supported by the State: An address delivered at the Wesleyan Chapel, Horseferry Road, Westminster, on Tuesday May 28th, 1839. (London: 1839), 20 pp.

39 The Manchester Methodists had written to their representatives through the Morning Chronicle of June 2nd.

40 Hansard, 3rd Ser. xlviii, 235.

opposition was prepared to use the Methodist, Church alliance even though the motives of the two groups were very different. Ashley was the next opposition speaker and he quoted the resolutions drawn up by the Wesleyans on June 12th. He hit the same note as Stanley when he stated that "the members of the Church of England and the Wesleyan Methodists formed so very large a portion of the people of England, that their opinions and feelings became matters of paramount consideration in a question of this nature".[41] The Evangelical statesman was the only opposition speaker in the debate who was prepared to treat the Wesleyans as more than a political lever for the support of the Church. He was prepared to move an address to the Crown "that the Wesleyan Methodists should be admitted within the terms of the grant as a third society".[42] Bunting's policy was not without a parliamentary advocate.[42b]

Hawes, speaking on the side of the Government stated that the minute of Privy Council had failed because of the union between the Church and the Wesleyans but perceptively commented that he did not think such an alliance would last.[43] Lord Egerton in reply stated that the union "would be permanent because it was based on a deeply-fixed religious principle."[44] Egerton was wrong about the reason for the

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41 Ibid., 273.

42 Ibid., 283.

42b Ashley had sent Bunting a copy of the Government's new proposals on June 7th with this comment:
"You will see that the paragraph marked 1. gives powers for the distribution of public money in support of Popish schools and schools founded on the principles of the Central School Society... I don't know what the Wesleyan body may think of such conditions; I hope the Church of England will reject them".
Ward, Early Victorian Methodism, p.219.

43 Hansard, 3rd Ser. xlviii, 291.

44 Ibid., 294.

alliance and he was also wrong about its permanence as Graham's Bill was to show four years later. When the debate resumed on June 19th Butler put his finger on the approaching problem. "The doctrines promulgated by the University of Oxford" had captured a considerable number of the parochial clergy and "he left the clergy of the Church to settle these points with their new allies, the Wesleyan Methodists. He only begged of the great mass of the members of that denomination to take well to task those who brought them in contact with Gentlemen who contended for absolution and penance..."[45] After Acland had once again illustrated the opposition's tactics of supporting the alliance between Churchmen and Wesleyans,[46] Lushington, for the first time in the debate, exposed the real motives for Methodist opposition. He quoted resolution III part 1[47] of the Methodist meeting on June 12th and stated that "it meant this or nothing: that the Protestants might take the money of the Roman Catholics, and apply it to the maintenance of the Protestant Church; but that notwithstanding, the Catholic was to be denied the slightest participation in its advantages."[48] For Lushington, the Methodist attitude was an offence against the principle of toleration. Even the Wesleyans would have agreed with that, if the gentleman meant toleration of "error and superstition".

The debate resumed on June 20th when O'Connell at last gave vent to his feelings about the Wesleyans.[49] Once again the opposition came to

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45 Ibid., 561-562.

46 Ibid., 563.

47 Appendix 2.

48 Hansard 3rd Ser. xlviii, 572.

49 Ibid., 618-620. To be dealt with later.

the rescue, in the person of Gladstone who went as far as supporting the possible re-unification of Church and Wesleyans.[50] Peel, in the last speech before the division made great play of the fact that the Wesleyans, who stood to gain from the latest proposals, still opposed them:

> "The Wesleyan Methodists have been treated like children. When they came forward in support of the anti-slavery question, and so strongly advocated the abolition of the slave-trade, then credit was given them for the highest discretion and for the purest motives; but now that they come forward to oppose the Government scheme of education, although it is impossible that they can be influenced by any but the purest motives, they are designated as the victims of credulity and misapprehension." [51]

The major opposition speakers, Stanley, Acland, Gladstone, Egerton, Ashley and Peel were all prepared to make use of the Wesleyan position. It gave a broader base to opposition arguments than pure Church exclusiveness, and Peel for one must have been glad of that. The Wesleyans were particularly useful because of their numerical strength. Teignmouth invoked the statistical argument to inform the House that the Church of England was six times more numerous than all the Dissenters in this country, including the Wesleyan Methodists and twelve times more numerous, excluding the Wesleyans.[52]

The Government only had a majority of five on going into a Committee of Supply and this was reduced to only two on the education grant itself. The combination of falling parliamentary majorities and rising public agitation ensured that the Government could not carry all its proposals. The Normal School had already been abandoned and the plan for State inspection had to go also. The plan of 1839 which Kay Shuttleworth described as "based on the recognition of the equality of civil rights

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50 Ibid., 625.

51 Ibid., 679.

52 Ibid., 753.

among religious Communions"[53] was shorn of its essentials; only the Committee of Privy Council survived.[54] The victory of the Church and the Wesleyans was almost complete. The Methodists had shown by the strength of their connexional agitation and its parliamentary effects that they could influence political measures. However, their victory was a pyrrhic one because of the consequences of their standpoint.

The first was a particularly unsavoury controversy with O'Connell which had been brewing throughout the 1820s and 30s and finally came to a head in 1839. Even before the education debate the Watchman had joined the Times in an unceasing tirade against the Irish agitator. The conflict finally came when O'Connell spoke in favour of the ministry's educational plan on June 20th. He was disturbed by support for the Wesleyans from the opposition benches. Did they not know that Wesley himself was implicated with the Protestant Association and the Gordon Riots? He challenged any Methodist to point out to him "any one single circumstance in their political history since, which showed them to be the friends of civil and religious liberty".[55] They had not supported the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts nor the attainment of Catholic Emancipation; "Why, then, exclaim so loudly in their favour? He would tell them - because they had joined in the 'No Popery' cry."[56] He too cast suspicion on the alliance between the Church and the Wesleyans. He warned the Churchmen to be careful; "They had taken the armed man on their back to hunt down the stag; but let them not imagine he would get off their back, or take his bridle from their mouth."[57]

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53 James Kay Shuttleworth, Public Education as affected by the Minutes of Privy Council from 1846 to 1852 (London, 1853), p.5.
54 Ibid., p.4.
55 Hansard 3rd Ser. xlviii, 618.
56 Ibid., 618.
57 Ibid., 619.

O'Connell took the conflict a stage further by addressing two letters in the public press to the Ministers and Office-bearers of the Wesleyan Methodist Societies of Manchester.[58] O'Connell chose Manchester for his attack because the Wesleyans had written to their representatives in the Morning Chronicle of June 2nd asking for their "services and patient attention" to a subject which would compromise the "national religion".[59] Manchester was also developing into the centre of Wesleyan Tory politics. O'Connell went over the same ground as in his Parliamentary speech and paid a dubious compliment to Wesleyan strength: "Your organisation is extensive, and would be formidable, but for its inherent spirit of uncharitable antipathy to your fellow Christians."[60]

The Manchester Education Committee decided not to enter into public controversy with O'Connell,[61] but the Irish politician had hit the Methodists on a sore point; the character of their founder, John Wesley. Daniel McAfee replied in typical Irish Methodist style,[62] but a more scholarly refutation was in the pipeline from George Cubitt, the connexional editor. Cubitt spent many hours in the British Museum in July and August and was in close contact with Bunting and John Bowers during the Liverpool Conference in 1839.[63] He constantly reported the

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58 Daniel O'Connell, To the Ministers and Office-Bearers of the Wesleyan Methodist Societies of Manchester. First letter London, 6 July 1839; Second letter, 1 Aug. 1839. Both were published in pamphlet form in Manchester, 1839.

59 Quoted by George Cubitt, Strictures on O'Connell's Letters to the Wesleyan Methodists (London, 1840), 80 pp.

60 O'Connell, First Letter, 6 July 1839.

61 A Meeting of the Manchester Wesleyan Education Committee was held on Monday July 15th in the Steward's Room, Oldham Street. John Rigg was the Chairman.

62 McAfee op.cit.

63 M.C.A. MSS. George Cubitt to Jabez Bunting, 29 July 1839; Cubitt to Bunting 30 July 1839; Cubitt to John Bowers, 10 Aug. 1839; Cubitt to Bowers, 12 Aug. 1839.

results of his historical research and soon felt ready "to meet Mr. O'Connell with a denial as brief and as bold as may be judged proper".[64] Cubitt produced his well written and well researched reply in late December 1839. The pamphlet is important, not only for the light it sheds on Wesley's links with the Protestant Associations in 1780, but also for its concise and orthodox statement of the Wesleyan relationship to politics. Cubitt states that "the Wesleyans are to be regarded not only as members of a united religious society, but as, individually, members of civil society".[65] Therefore in all civil matters individual Wesleyans were free to exercise their own judgment. It was not the job of the preachers to drive "herds of voters to an election". That was why the Wesleyan Conference adopted no measures on the question of Roman Catholic Emancipation:

> "The oneness of opinion and feeling, indeed, was so great, that the movement appeared as much like a Connexional one, as it could be not to be Connexional; but still it was only the movement of Wesleyan individuals..." [66]

The Connexion had only expressed its corporate opinion on public matters in relation to religion; the right of sending missionaries to India; the sabbath-question; Government participation in Indian Idolatry; Slavery and finally National Education. Non-Wesleyans found this tricky logic a bit difficult to understand especially over National Education, since if it was a religious issue it was also, clearly, a party dispute. The Wesleyans would have replied to this by stating that if a religious issue also happened to be a party issue then that was not of their making. The logic was tight and not unreasonable, but, in English

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64 M.C.A. MSS. Cubitt to Bunting, 29 July 1839.

65 Cubitt, op. cit., p.19.

66 Ibid., p.22.

politics in the 1830s, its drift was inevitably towards Toryism. The dividing line between religion and politics had become practically impossible to draw.

In the controversy with O'Connell the Wesleyans, apart from McAfee, acquitted themselves with reason and moderation. It was unlikely, however, that a public dispute with Catholic Ireland's most popular politician would assist the Irish Methodist mission to the Roman Catholics of Ireland. Political evangelicalism was no more popular with Irish Catholics than its counterparts today.

A second consequence of Wesleyan opposition to the educational proposals, was an internal conflict at the Liverpool Conference in 1839. Once again it was primarily a confrontation between Galland and Bunting. Galland, who thought that the 1839 proposals were the best that could be obtained was sent a copy of the petition drawn up by the United Committees. In his capacity as Circuit Superintendent for Leeds West, Galland circulated the petition even though he was opposed to it. The Tory papers claimed that Galland was against the government plan and the Leeds Superintendent explained his position in a letter to the Leeds Mercury.[67] The resultant debate[68] centred on the authority of the Metropolitan Methodist Committees. Vevers, who, according to Gregory, began every speech with "either is, or it was not", gave another example of "the Veverian dilemma"; "The London Committee either did right or did wrong. If right, it ought to be supported, and Mr. Galland did wrong in writing his letter".[69] Galland magnanimously gave

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67 Quoted by Ward, op.cit., pp.246-247.

68 Gregory, Sidelights, pp.268-280.

69 Ibid., p.274.

way in a moving speech and Bunting had won yet another victory for metropolitan and ministerial authority, no-Popery and Wesleyan Toryism. In his victory he carried with him at least the 125,595 Methodists who signed the petitions against the Government plan.[70]

During the Conference debate James Dixon made an interesting comment:

> "The Committee [The United Committee in London] were of different politics: Whigs and Tories. If the Government retire from the Protestantism of this country, may we not interfere?" [71]

Taking this in association with the Wesleyan electoral behaviour in the 1830s, it appears that Wesleyan Toryism was based more on anti-catholicism than natural political predilliction, ecclesiastical policy or anti-radicalism. Of course there were those, such as Bunting, who would have been Tories in any case, but Bunting's political support in a basically apolitical or non-political Connexion came from the lead he gave in opposing Catholicism. That that source was easily tapped is revealed by the connexional opposition to Catholic Emancipation, before Bunting was in the no-popery fold.

Another consequence of the Methodist opposition to the Government was their closer identity with ultra-Protestant groups. In the mid-1830s before the Duke of Cumberland dissolved the Orange lodges[72] the Watchman tried to observe its editorial policy of acting as a moderating influence in political disputes. The newspaper scarcely veiled its sympathy for the Orange Order but it did not actively support it:

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70 Ibid., p.275.

71 Ibid., p.274.

72 See H. Senior Orangeism in Ireland and Britain 1795-1836 (1966).

> "We have no objection to its [Government] discountenance of Orange associations, wherever they may appear; but let us have even-handed justice, and a recognition of the rights of Protestantism in the exemption of the Irish clergy from persecution." 73

When the Orange lodges were disbanded the Watchman praised their adherence to the law and contrasted their behaviour with that of O'Connell's General Association of Ireland:

> "If it was proper to put down the Orange Association - and we do not say that it was not - can it be right to allow a Popish Association, under the immediate direction and control of "the Great Agitator", regularly and publicly to meet under the very eye of Government..." 74

It is difficult to know if many individual Methodists participated in Orange lodges but Gideon Ouseley certainly did, even after 1836.[75]

In 1835 the Protestant Association reappeared[76] with Evangelical stalwarts such as Hugh McNeile from Liverpool and R.H. McGhee from Dublin to the forefront. The Association had a central executive committee and extensive local branches. As one might expect it flourished in the large British cities which had a substantial Irish immigrant population. Although the Watchman published the reports of the Protestant Association[77] it could be rather cool in its comments about the Association's "flimsy reasoning".[78] By the end of the 1830s

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73 Watchman, 30 Sept. 1835, also 18 Mar. 1835.

74 Watchman, 1 Feb. 1837.

75 Ouseley's initiation charter into Killaloe Orange Lodge exists in the I.W.H.S. MSS.

76 G.A. Cahill, "The Protestant Association and the Anti-Maynooth Agitation of 1845", The Catholic Historical Review, xliii (October 1957), pp.273-308.

77 Watchman, 24 Feb. 1836; 5 Oct. 1836; 12 Oct. 1836.

78 Watchman, 18 May 1836.

Methodist participation in the Association had grown dramatically. "At a Great Meeting of the Protestant Associations of Manchester, Liverpool, Warrington, Wigan and Northwich",[79] there was almost a complete turnout of the Manchester preachers,[80] including Joseph Taylor the Circuit Superintendent. They were keeping company with Hugh McNeile, Dr. Cooke and Hugh Stowell. The Association composed a letter to the Earl of Roden asking him to be its chairman. The letter which explained the principles of the Association was virtually a Wesleyan Tory political manifesto for the 1840s:

> "In assembling, therefore, to give expression to our convictions respecting the anti-national influence exercised upon our government and our legislature, by the subjects of the papal court resident amongst us, and to petition against the continuance of public support to Maynooth College, or to any system of combined education which withdraws from the children of the poor the free, unfettered use of the authorised version of the Holy Scriptures." [81]

The Rev. Hugh Stowell was called upon to propose the second resolution and, in the course of his speech, he thanked the Wesleyans for supporting the Church and congratulated them on having attracted the attention of O'Connell. At a meeting of the Sheffield Protestant Association a report stated that "the orchestra was filled by nearly the whole of the

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79 26 Sept. 1839. From Press Cuttings in M.C.A.

80 They were:

(Oldham Street) - John Rigg, John Smith, William Bunting and Louis Rees.
(Grosvenor Street) - Joseph Taylor, George Steward, Benjamin Waddy.
(Great Bridgewater Street) - Barnard Slater and Timothy Ingle.
(Altrincham) - Amos Learoyd.
James Wood (layman) was also there.

81 M.C.A., Press Cuttings.

Clergy and Wesleyan Ministers. James Dixon, another Circuit Superintendent made a speech.[82] The same pattern was repeated at Macclesfield.

By 1841 the coolness of the Watchman had been transformed into enthusiastic support:

> "The great cause advocated by the Protestant Association is bound up with the religion, the constitution, and all the blessings of civil and religious liberty in the empire... They have to some extent revived, in an age menaced with the predominance of Puseyite apostasy from the great principles of the Reformation, the true spirit of our Protestant ancestors. They give to Protestantism as such, apart from its denominational divisions, the benefit of an organised confederacy. They put society on its guard against the stealthy advances of the emissaries of Rome. They powerfully influenced the elections in favour of the maintenance of Protestant ascendancy." [83]

Bunting had protested against the Irish preachers speaking at Brunswick Clubs in 1828-29, but he was unperturbed by the latest developments. But there were others who were. William Bunting's use of his pulpit in Manchester to preach Tory politics was criticised in letters to the Manchester Guardian.[84] T.H. Williams regretted Bunting's "determination to persevere in so mischievous a course, and the evident intention, in high quarters, by means of 'No Popery' lectures, to prepare the Wesleyan body for a political crusade in the abused name of Protestantism".[85] Jonathan Ledger "wished that those clergymen and

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82 Ibid.

83 Watchman, 10 Nov. 1841. Written in response to an article in the Times condemning the excesses of expression at the last Exeter Hall meeting of the Protestant Association.

84 Pulpit Politics, The Correspondence of the Rev. W.M. Bunting, "an old Wesleyan Preacher"; Mr. Holland Hoole, and Mr. T.H. Williams with Additions (London, 1840), 35 pp.

85 Ibid., p.1.

Methodist preachers who figure in 'No Popery' lectures and at meetings of "the Protestant Association" would permit their zeal to flow in streams of Christian benevolence..."[86]

Bunting and James Wood even went as far as attending a dinner in honour of Sir George Murray, the Manchester Conservative candidate. Gowland has argued that the activities of Bunting, Wood and James Dixon, who came to Grosvenor Street in 1840 followed the law of diminishing returns.[87] Most Wesleyans were anti-catholic but not many wanted to go as far as that trio. The Irish policy of the Whig, O'Connell alliance and the proposals for national education provoked strong pockets of Wesleyan No-Popery particularly in Manchester, Sheffield and London. These pockets remained unchecked by the Conference which was itself dominated by the Tories.

The fourth consequence of Wesleyan opposition to national education lay in the field of education itself. The cold logic of the Watchman, Thomas Allan and Edward Baines had triumphed over the optimistic hopes of Bunting and Ashley. The Wesleyans would have to make do without government aid. Indeed they were under pressure to instigate something fairly impressive if they were not to merit the tag of "foes of education". The Education Committee suggested that the excess money from the Centenary Fund should be used to develop a "system of instruction, which, by its thoroughly Scriptural character, should present a standing protest against the spreading influence of Popery..."[88]

The Wesleyans were hindered by lack of finance partly caused by the

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86 Ibid., p.27.

87 Gowland, unpublished thesis op.cit.

88 Wesleyan Education Reports (1839) p.14.

business recession.[89] Nevertheless by 1842 the nine infant schools and twenty-two week-day schools of 1837 had been expanded to 28 Infant and 234 week-day schools.[90]

The Methodist effort was typically systematic and well organised. In 1840 it was proposed that "three young men should be immediately sought out... to be educated either at the Glasgow or Borough Road School: who, when prepared, shall be employed in instructing other masters, or travelling about the schools already in existence, in order to perfect them in systematic modes of teaching..."[91] In 1841 the principles on which Wesleyan education was to be carried out were drawn up. The Bible in the Authorised Version was to be the basis of all religious instruction and a certain portion of every day was to be set apart for the devotional reading of Scripture with adequate explanation by the teacher. The schools were to be firmly linked to the Methodist Connexion but they were not to be exclusively sectarian.[92]

The Methodist educational achievements, on limited resources leaves one to wonder what might have been achieved if they had accepted government aid and left the Roman Catholic Church to its own devices. By the end of the 1830s Wesleyan anti-catholicism had cost the Connexion dearly in so many ways; there was disharmony in the Conference; in some pulpits the preaching of the Gospel had been relegated to second place; their attitudes had forced them into political controversy which augurs ill for any evangelical denomination; the missionary cause in Ireland

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89 Ward, op.cit., p.245.

90 Wesleyan Education Reports (1843).

91 Ibid. (1840) pp.23-24.

92 Ibid. (1841), Appendix 1.

was bound to fail and they had been deprived of state aid in educating their children. No wonder Jonathan Ledger could write wistfully:

> "It is my conviction that the spirit of liberality is quietly pervading the mass of society, whilst the clamour periodically heard in certain halls and theatres is only the despairing outcry of an unhappy class that sees itself likely to be numbered ere long with 'the things that were' ". 93

93 Pulpit Politics, p.32.

APPENDIX I

To the Honourable the Commons of Great Britain and Ireland, in Parliament assembled.

The Petition of the undersigned, being members or friends of the Congregation of Wesleyan Methodists, worshipping at _____ Chapel, in the Town of _____ and County of _____.

Humbly Sheweth,

That your Petitioners, though strongly impressed, in common with the whole Connexion of Wesleyan Methodists, to which they belong, with the desirableness and importance of extending, as widely as possible, the incalculable benefits of a truly Christian Education have seen, with the greatest regret and alarm, a Scheme of National Education recently laid before Parliament, as approved by the Committee of Privy Council, and proposed to be carried into effect by a Grant of the Public Money.

That, in addition to several other objections, which deserve the most grave and deliberate consideration, your Petitioners are of opinion, that the said Scheme involves a direct violation of the first principles of our Protestant Constitution; inasmuch as it contemplates the training and employment, by the State of Romish, (among other) Teachers, and practically recognises the corrupted Romish Translations of the Holy Scriptures as of equal authority with that Authorised Version which has so long obtained and preserved the suffrage and preference of almost every body of Protestant Christians among us, and is now, in fact, the great external link and badge of English Protestant Communion.

That such a practical recognition of the Roman Catholic Versions as this Scheme involves, is in the highest degree objectionable, not only on account of the unfaithful and perverted renderings which those versions contain, but also and additionally, because certain Notes are generally connected with them, which, in the judgment of all Protestants, inculcate the most pernicious errors in doctrine and practice.

That, after much and anxious attention to the subject, it is the opinion of your Petitioners, that any attempt to instruct, in the same School, the children of the poorer classes (whose Parents, in the exercise of their undoubted rights as Men and Britons, belong to various Christian Denominations), by Teaching adapted to every prevailing variety of religious belief or opinion, will, under the present circumstances of this free country, be found impracticable; and even if practicable, by any conceivable compromise of conscientious principles and preferences, could only lead to perpetual collision and inconvenience, and would, in many instances, produce among the children so incongruously mingled together, a dangerous spirit of scepticism and unbelief.

For these and other reasons, your Petitioners feel it their imperative duty most respectfully but earnestly to pray that your Honourable House will refuse its sanction to the aforesaid Scheme of Education, and will not agree to any grant of Public Money for the purpose of carrying it into effect.

APPENDIX 2

Resolutions at a Meeting of the United Committee of the Wesleyan Methodists on the proposed plan of National Education, held on Monday, June 10th, 1839, and, by adjournment, on Wednesday, June 12th.

1. That this meeting perceives with unfeigned regret, in the "Report" now read, that the Committee of Privy Council have intimated to Her Majesty their continued preference of the Scheme of Public Education proposed in their Minute of April 13th, 1839, to which such decided objections have been unequivocally expressed by a very large majority of the Christian Public in their numerous Petitions to Parliament, and which this meeting is still of opinion, "involved a direct violation of the first principles of our Protestant Constitution, inasmuch as it contemplated the Training and Employment, by the State, of Romish (among other) Teachers, and practically recognised the corrupted Romish Translations of the Holy Scriptures as of equal authority with the Authorised Version".

2. That the regrets of this meeting are necessarily associated with feelings of continued apprehension and alarm, when they further learn from the recent "Report", that the Committee of Council have not by any means explicitly and frankly abandoned the Plan in question, but have simply withdrawn it for the present, on account of the "difficulties" which they experienced "in reconciling conflicting views;" reserving their original design for "further consideration", and stating that "they therefore postpone taking any steps" ; "until greater concurrence of opinion is found to prevail".

3. That the new Plan for the application of the Parliamentary Educational Grants, described in the "Report" of June 3rd, and for which the aid of the Public Treasury is now to be solicited, though it proposes to revert to the previous Plan of promoting Public Education through the medium of the two great and recognised Societies (the National School Society and the British and Foreign School Society) and is, in that respect, a material improvement of the scheme of the 13th of April, is nevertheless, in the honest and deliberate judgment of this Meeting, liable to several strong and decided objections.

(i) It states that "the Committee do not feel themselves precluded from making Grants in particular cases, which shall appear to them to call for the aid of Government, although the applications may not come from either of the two mentioned Societies". To this proposition, no objection would have been taken by this Meeting, or by the Religious Community whose general principles and feelings it represents, if the extended powers which it confers had been duly limited and defined, especially by restricting them to the granting of Public Money, and of the sanction and support of the State, to the Schools in which the Holy Scriptures, in the Authorised Version only, are received and regularly used. Such a restriction appears to this Meeting to be due to the yet unrepealed principles of our Protestant Constitution, and necessary for the prevention of that direct violation of the rights

of conscience which would be perpetrated, if Parliament were to sanction the taxation of the Protestants of England for the establishment and support of Romish Schools, in which the corrupt Versions and mischievous Notes of the Romish Church would be made by authority, to a considerable extent, the basis of State-Instruction.

(ii) It appears to this Meeting that, under the sweeping and comprehensive clause of the plan now proposed, to which reference has just been made, not only Roman Catholic Schools, but Schools of any and every description, may, at the sole, unchecked, and almost irresponsible discretion of the Four Members of the Committee of Privy Council, receive the sanction and pecuniary support of the State; and that the power thus claimed may, if they think fit, be used in favour even of Schools conducted on the very plan and principles proposed in the obnoxious Scheme of April 13th, which though professedly abandoned, in deference to the public feeling and judgment, might, in this indirect manner, be silently but effectually introduced, and largely carried into operation. Thus to surrender to the private discretion of any four Officers of the State the unlimited control and direction of so important a matter as Public Education, involving principles and considerations of which such Functionaries are not likely to be, generally speaking the most competent judges, appears to this Meeting to be in the highest degree dangerous and unwise.

(iii) Another Clause in the "Report" of June 3rd, now before Parliament, is as follows: "The Committee recommend that no further grant be made, now or hereafter, for the establishment or support of Normal Schools, or of any other Schools, unless the right of inspection be retained, in order to secure a conformity to the regulations and discipline established in the several schools, with such improvements as may from time to time be suggested by the Committee". To this Clause, on the ground of its vague, undefined, and unlimited generality, as it at present stands, this Meeting is of opinion that insurmountable objections may be urged, in addition to the objections already stated against other parts of the same plan; and that, if sanctioned in its existing form and phraseology, it must inevitably operate to the exclusion of the managers of numerous and important Schools from the possibility of conscientiously availing themselves of their just share of those Grants of Public Money which the wisdom of Parliament may deem it right to make for educational purposes. To such an "inspection" of schools, aided by public money, as would secure their efficiency, in imparting to the children of the poor a useful elementary education in those branches of knowledge which are strictly secular, no reasonable objection can be entertained; provided it were so conducted as not to be made the occasion and pretext for any harassing and mischievous interference of the Inspectors with the power of the Committees of each separate Denominational School to select and appoint such Teachers as they may judge to possess suitable religious character and qualifications, or with the regulations and discipline of the schools of each Christian Denomination in reference to matters of a religious and moral nature. Against any authorised interference of the State, or its agents,

with the views and preferences of each Denomination in matters of that kind, this Meeting earnestly protests, as an invasion of Religious Liberty, to which, they are persuaded, the Christian people of this country will never consent. And when this Meeting considers, that the object of the Clause in question is stated to be that of SECURING A CONFORMITY (generally, and without any specified limitation whatever), not only to certain undefined "regulations and discipline", but also "to such IMPROVEMENTS as may FROM TIME TO TIME be suggested by the Committee" - they feel it incumbent upon them, in duty to the rights and interests of the Body for whom they act, to express their earnest and most anxious hope that the plan contained in the "Report" of June 3rd, unless very materially altered, and secured against probable perversion, will not receive the sanction or pecuniary support of the British House of Commons.

4. That these Resolutions be published and circulated, as the Sub-Committee may direct.

Signed, on behalf of the United Committee,

Edmund Grindrod, Chairman

Samuel Jackson)
) Secretaries
Robert Newstead)

VIII

METHODISM AND THE EDUCATIONAL CLAUSES OF GRAHAM'S FACTORY BILL (1843).

"The history of Methodism is, we do not scruple to say, the history of a heresy; Being nothing short of a formal heresy, good could not come of it, nor will good come of it."

J.H. Newman in the British Critic (Oct. 1840).[1]

"It would tend to place the work of general education, to a great extent, under the control and influence of a Sect in the Established Church, whose Popish doctrines and practices all sound Protestants must regard with abhorrence and alarm."

Wesleyan resolution on Graham's Educational Proposals [2]

"Men, and the conduct of men, are much more the creatures of circumstances than they generally appear in history."

Sir Robert Peel [3]

The Watchman began the new decade with little grounds for optimism. The alliance between the Whigs and O'Connell appeared to make insatiable demands. The newspaper stated in its first article of 1840 that the ministerial policy in Ireland had paralysed the Irish Church and the nation's educational needs had been "sacrificed at the shrine of Romish ambition".[4] With the same ministers still in power there seemed little prospect of a change of policy. On the theological front the scene was no brighter because if 'Puseyism' were permitted "to leaven the Church of England her doom would be inevitable." [5]

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1 A Review of The Life and Times of Selina, Countess of Huntingdon (London 1839), in the British Critic, xxviii (Oct. 1840), pp.263-295. Also J.H. Newman, Essays Critical and Historical, i (1871).

2 Resolution 2 part 5 of the meeting of the Methodist United Committees on May 10, 1843.

3 Some Maxims and Reflections of Sir Robert Peel. N. Gash, Sir Robert Peel (1972), p.717.

4 Watchman, 4 Jan. 1840.

5 Ibid.

Politically, the sanguine expectations of the Watchman were not borne out. Although the Irish Corporation Act was eventually passed, its terms caused no real alarm. It was the measure of a weak government forced into a compromise. Fifty-eight corporations were dissolved and then ten reconstructed. Whereas the English Act of 1834 granted the municipal franchise to all ratepayers, the Irish Act confined it to £10 householders. Although stout hearts such as Inglis still held out, Peel supported the government and the Bill passed with large majorities. The death of Thomas Drummond in April, 1840 ended a phase of increasing liberalisation in Irish administration. In the same month O'Connell came into the open with the National Repeal Association and publicly criticised Government policy. The Whigs, no more than the Tories, could countenance the repeal of the union.

Consequently in January 1841 the Watchman was more optimistic:

> "The year just closed is remarkable, under a review of the domestic policy of the British Empire, for presenting us, for the first time, with the gratifying spectacle of Government exhibiting a hostile front to the insatiate ambition and anti-national claims of Irish Romanism." [6]

The Methodists had to suffer one final threat from the Whigs in the shape of Lord Morpeth's Registration Bill. Morpeth's Bill proposed to put the franchise on a new footing; £5 rating and a fourteen-year lease. Peel argued that the new measure was a breach of both the Catholic Emancipation and Reform Acts.[7] The Watchman asked the pertinent question, "with such a powerful addition as this Bill would give to the Popish party in Parliament, how could Protestant ascendancy be retained."[8] Peel's opposition to the Bill came in for particular

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6 Watchman, 6 Jan. 1841.

7 Gash, op.cit., pp.250-251.

8 Watchman, 3 Mar. 1841. See also 17 Feb. 1841.

praise, as well it might, for on April 29th the government was defeated and the Bill withdrawn.

The Whigs could not retain office for much longer. On June 5th Peel won a motion of no confidence by one vote and two days later Russell announced the dissolution of Parliament. The resultant election revealed a strong move to the Conservatives. By mid-July it was generally accepted that they would have a majority of about 80. The Watchman was jubilant. "The great and gratifying proof which the general elections... afford, of a combined Protestant and Conservative reaction, is calculated to inspire every well-regulated mind with devout thankfulness to the Great Disposer of events, for a victory, scarcely of less importance to the nation than that of Waterloo."[9]

Had it forgotten that the victor of Waterloo had conceded Catholic Emancipation? Surely it could not happen again; "a path of political usefulness more splendid than was ever opened to any man, now lies before him [Peel] ."[10] The editor should have realised that Peel's position on Irish Municipal Reform was not as firm as some of his party had wished, and that he too would have to face the prospect of governing Ireland. The Lichfield House Compact bought off "the great Agitator" but if there was to be no compact, what then? The editor should also have realised that the great protector of the Church in the 1830s might still want to favour it. Although Peel made use of Wesleyan opposition to national education in 1839, their ground was not the same. Peel objected to a system of national education "which studiously excludes from the superintendence and control of education given to the children

9 Watchman, 14 July, 1841.

10 Watchman, 4 Aug. 1841.

of the establishment the dignitaries of the Established Church..."[11] How would the Wesleyans respond to an educational measure favouring a Puseyite Church?

However, the optimism of the Watchman was unmitigated[12] and it sent the Peel administration on its way with some well chosen words on its potential Irish policy:

> "It has been said, that Ireland will present the real difficulty with which Sir Robert Peel will have to contend... Only, let him remember, that Justice to Ireland, and concession to those whose grand object is papal ascendancy, are different things." [13]

The early actions of the new administration confirmed the Wesleyan hopes, particularly the appointments of Earl de Grey as Irish Lord Lieutenant and Rev. Dr. Gilbert to the see of Chichester. On January 5th 1842 when the Watchman published its retrospect of the previous year, it was quite content with the new administration's "protestant character."[14] As a result, the heat was taken out of the activities of the Protestant Association and the Wesleyans beat a hasty retreat.[15] With Ireland left in the supposedly safe hands of Peel and de Grey, the Wesleyans were able to concentrate on that other pressing problem - the growth of the Oxford Movement in the Church of England.

The Watchman had been aware of the possible dangers of the Oxford tracts as early as 1836.[16] Those dangers appeared to be embodied in the popular preaching of William Dodsworth[17] in Margaret Street Chapel

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11 Hansard, 3rd Ser. xlviii, 672.

12 Watchman, 10 Nov. 1841 "We acknowledge that our expectations are high".

13 Watchman, 15 Sept. 1841.

14 Watchman, 5 Jan. 1842.

15 W.R.Ward, Religion and Society in England 1790-1850 (1972), p.216.

16 Watchman, 1836.

17 Ibid. See D.N.B.

in London. Dodsworth had been an evangelical while at Trinity College, Cambridge but was increasingly drawn to tractarianism and eventually joined the Roman Catholic Church in 1851. Also in 1836 an anonymous pamphlet, entitled The Church of England Compared with Wesleyan Methodism[18] was published in Bristol. The pamphlet stated that the Church of England "took its rise in apostolical times" while Methodism only dated from the eighteenth century. While the Church of England's separation from Rome was not schismatical because of the corruption of the Romish Church, the Methodist separation was a schism from an "undeniably scriptural" church. The pamphlet went on to attack the Methodist doctrine of justification, Wesleyan public worship and the Methodist concept of ministry. The Methodists responded to this attack, perhaps the first from the Oxford Movement on Wesleyanism, in a pamphlet by Thomas Jackson entitled The Wesleyans Vindicated.[19] Jackson felt compelled to write a reply because the British Magazine[20] had recommended the circulation of the anonymous pamphlet to the Clergy and laity of England. After giving a theological reply in the form of a dialogue Jackson stated that the Church was making it very difficult for the Wesleyans to continue supporting it; "if 'oppression maketh a wise man mad', false charges will sometimes provoke even a religious man's resentment."[21]

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18 Epaphras, The Church of England compared with Wesleyan Methodism (Bristol, 1836).

19 Thomas Jackson, The Wesleyans Vindicated from the Calumnies contained in a pamphlet entitled The Church of England Compared with Wesleyan Methodism, in a Dialogue between a Churchman and a Methodist (London, 1837).

20 Ibid., Preface.

21 Ibid., p.31.

As was customary with nineteenth-century theological controversies, the debate was not allowed to end with Jackson's reply. In 1837 the Church of England Quarterly Review[22] reviewed the two pamphlets in terms very unfavourable to the Wesleyans. After scoring the necessary points the writer called for 'Charity', but the conflict was just beginning: "Before the end of 1837 the learned world perceived the difference between Newman's men and the high churchmen of tradition."[23] The Oxford school began to use the British Critic as its organ in preference to the British Magazine. The Critic had its first bite at the Wesleyans in 1836[24] in an article called 'How is the Church to be saved?' and followed this a year later in a review article on the Lyra Apostolica:[25]

> "Yet is is impossible to study their [Wesleyans] current hymns, (or still more hear them sung,) without perceiving the direct effects of the necessity of this sectional excitement, first in debasing the character of their poetry, and then in its reaction upon their own minds... The Ultra-Protestant spirit led to the exclusion from poetry of the great objective truths of religion."

In October, 1840 in a review article of The Life and Times of Selina Countess of Huntingdon, in the Critic, Newman made the remark with which this chapter opened. Animosity was building up, particularly when the Wesleyans realised that the Oxford movement was more than just a passing phase which would blow over as quickly as it had come. By 1838 Newman had commanded a large following at Oxford and the Watchman devoted an increasing number of articles to the "Oxford Tract Divines."[26]

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22 The Cause of the Wesleyans weakened or a Review of two pamphlets reprinted from the Church of England Quarterly Review (London 1837).

23 O. Chadwick, The Victorian Church, part 1 p.171.

24 British Critic, xix (1836). pp.12-73.

25 Ibid., xxi (1837), pp.167-185.

26 Watchman, 7 Feb. 1838.

The Wesleyans were particularly antagonised by the High Church disdain of the Bible Societies.[27] In the approaching conflict the Methodists were keen to win support from the Evangelicals within the Church:

> "Another, the rise of which, in common with the Rev Hugh McNeile, Hugh Stowell, A.S Thelwall and other excellent evangelical clergymen, we deeply deplore, is the rampant spirit of an exclusive intolerance, embodied in the dogmas of the Oxford Tract Divines." [28]

There was a brief ceasefire in 1839 when the Wesleyans needed Church support to keep out a greater evil, but by 1840 the parties were at their posts once again. The Watchman speculated on how far the Church of England would "succumb to the doctrines of the new school of divinity at Oxford"[29] because "were Puseyism permitted to leaven the Church of England, her doom would be inevitable".[30] The publication of the infamous tract 90 in February of 1841 was the final straw and Bunting made a notable speech at the Manchester Conference of 1841:

> "No person on earth or in heaven - if I may use the language - can reconcile Methodism with High-Churchism... I wish the Evangelicals would disavow the Puseyites... Unless the Church of England will protest against Puseyism in some intelligible form, it will be the duty of the Methodists to protest against the Church of England." [31]

The war of pamphlets reached its climax in 1842, the year before Graham brought in his factory education proposals. Beginning on February 25th the Wesleyans began publishing their own Tracts for the Times. The tracts appeared in a neat octavo edition put out by John Mason, the connexional editor, and circulated by Wesleyan ministers and by booksellers. They cost 2d per sheet and their titles are self-explanatory:

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27 Watchman, 10 Oct. 1838.

28 Watchman, 31 Oct. 1838.

29 Watchman, 29 Apr. 1840.

30 Watchman, 4 Jan. 1840.

31 Gregory, Sidelights, p.317.

1 "Why don't you come to Church?" A dialogue between a clergyman and a Wesleyan Methodist. Published 25 February and sold 10,000 copies within a month.

2 Wesleyan Methodism not a Schism.

3 Apostolical Succession - A Summary of Objections to the Modern Claim.

4 Wesleyan Ministers True Ministers of Christ.

5 Modern Methodism, Wesleyan Methodism (Seeking Wesley's authority for modern Methodism).

6 Justification by Faith an Essential Doctrine of Christianity - A Dialogue between a Churchman and a Wesleyan.

7 Lyra Apostolica, an Impious Misnomer.

8 Baptism not Regeneration.

9 Wesleyans have the True Christian Sacraments. [31b]

In his letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury E.B. Pusey charged Wesleyanism with heresy in its doctrine of Justification. Pusey argued that the Wesleyan emphasis on Justification by feeling would lead to antinomianism and the relegation of the sacraments to secondary importance.[32] Thomas Jackson the new theological tutor at Richmond College replied to Pusey's charges.[33] At the end of a long and primarily doctrinal pamphlet Jackson stated that the Oxford influenced Clergy had distributed tracts all over England, containing remarks against the Methodists. Jackson saw in this process the operation of a conspiracy "to exasperate the Wesleyan societies against the Church of England, and thus weaken the Protestant interest; that so the Church of Rome may

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31b Beecham informed Bunting of the proposed publication of these tracts on 13 Jan. 1842. Hannah wrote number two and Cubitt wrote number six. Ward, Early Victorian Methodism pp.270-271.

32 The charges are reproduced in Thomas Jackson, A Letter to the Rev. Edward B. Pusey D.D. Regius Professor of Hebrew in the University of Oxford; being a Vindication of the Tenets and Character of the Wesleyan Methodists against his misrepresentations and censures (London, 1842).

33 Ibid.

regain her lost ascendancy."[34] He suggested that the tracts against Wesleyanism embodied the same principles as those circulated by the " 'Catholic Institute', of which Daniel O'Connell and his friends are the most active members."

The inference shows just how much the Oxford Movement had shaken the Methodists. Worse was to follow in a pamphlet by Henry Fish, a Wesleyan preacher stationed at Lambeth in London.[35] In a work which owed more to fiction than to fact, Fish resurrected the familiar old spectre of the Jesuits:

> "We cannot but apprehend that there is a conspiracy against the Protestant religion organized and at work, on an extensive scale, in which the Oxford Tractarians, either as chief or subordinate agents, sustain a prominent part... We do not mean to say that all the Tractarians are Jesuits, but we have no doubt that some of them are." [36]

The accusations may have been wild and not representative of Methodist reaction but the pamphlet was distributed by the connexional editor. The Methodists genuinely believed that the Church might succumb to Puseyism and if it did then they had a solemn duty "to denounce her as apostate and anti-christian."[37] The great bulwark of Protestantism was patently no longer so, and already the Wesleyans were casting their nets in search of new allies. In 1839 the Methodists had joined the Church in gaining the rejection of the Whig educational proposals; as the Church stood in the early 1840s, such an alliance was impossible. But there were still the Evangelicals. In 1841 there were

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34 Ibid., p.109.

35 Henry Fish A.M., Jesuitism traced in the Movements of the Oxford Tractarians (London, 1842).

36 Ibid., p.14.

37 Jacob Stanley, A Tract for the Times, Puseyite Artifice Detected and Wesleyan Methodists Vindicated (Bristol, 1842). and The Danger of Puseyism and High Churchism: Being an answer to an anonymous pamphlet entitled 'The Danger of Dissent' (London, 1845).

1,700 clergymen in the Church Pastoral-Aid Society.[38] The Wesleyans particularly admired Noel, Stowell, McNeile, Thelwall, Bickersteth and W.C. Wilson whose Thoughts on the Times was re-published by the Conference office in 1842. Unfortunately for the Methodists, the Evangelicals, with some exceptions were as much Churchmen as the Oxford Tractarians - they would soon find that out.

While the Wesleyans and the Oxford Tractarians were engaged in their dispute, Sir James Graham, The Home Secretary was considering the new government's responsibility for education. Brougham wrote to him in October 1841 enquiring if the government meant to do anything. He realised that any Tory measure was likely to be more favourable to the Church than the Whigs.[39] Graham in his reply summed up the difficulty that was facing him: "religion, the keystone of education, is, in this country, the bar to its progress."[40] Accepting the premise that religion could not be separated from the system, how could one satisfy all the "contending sects"? He ruled out the possibility of an agreement on the fundamental articles of the Christian faith as the basis of a mixed scheme of general education. From the outset Graham had decided on a scheme favourable to the Established Church but with room to manoeuvre so that, if at all possible, the Dissenters could be included. If the Whig measure had been defeated by the alliance between the Church and the Wesleyans, could not that same alliance work in the government's favour?

After consultation with Saunders, Shuttleworth, (Clerk of the Council), and Horner (the Inspector-General of the Factories), Graham submitted his

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38 Chadwick, op.cit., p.446.

39 Brougham to Graham, 21 Oct. 1841. in C.S. Parker, Life and Letters of Sir James Graham, i (London, 1907).

40 Graham to Brougham 24 Oct. 1841. Parker, p.339.

plans to Church leaders and then to the Cabinet;[41] the order was significant.

On February 28th, 1843 Ashley moved an Address to the Queen requesting her consideration for "the best means of diffusing the benefits and blessings of a moral and religious education among the working classes of the people."[42] Graham made this the occasion for bringing his own proposals before the House. Children between the ages of eight and thirteen were not to work more than six and a half hours in any day thereby allowing three hours for education. A system of schools managed by trusts was to be established. These trusts, composed of seven individuals (the local Anglican priest as chairman, two churchwardens, two factory owners and two others to be elected annually), would have the power of appointing a master "subject to the approval of the bishop of the diocese as to his competency to give religious instruction to members of the Established Church."[43] Only the authorised version of the scriptures was to be used and the children of Dissenters need not attend when Church catechism and Liturgy was taught.

The likely dissenting objections were obvious from the beginning because the scheme virtually ensured that the trusts would be predominantly Anglican and that the master would be Anglican also. The proposals were received with calmness in the House; the need was so great that no-one wanted to ruin the government scheme until due consideration could be given. The Bill received its first reading on March 7th. On March 23rd the Wesleyan Committee of Privileges[44] and the Education Committee

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41 Graham to the Bishop of London, 27 Dec. 1842, Parker, pp.342-343. See also N. Gash, Reaction and Reconstruction in English Politics pp.86-87.

42 Hansard, 3rd Ser. lxvii, 75.

43 Ibid., 88.

44 M.C.A. MSS. Most of this chapter will be based on the manuscript minutes of the Committee of Privileges which I discovered in a deep recess of the Methodist archives. The Minutes indicate that the Committee was sitting at an earlier stage than has been supposed.

met to consider the new Bill. Various letters were read including one from James Dixon, expressing alarm at the clauses of the Bill. A letter written slightly later by A E Farrar, who was stationed at North Liverpool, is indicative of the reaction:

> "I put under your [Dr Bunting] eye a letter of Mr E Baines on the subject of the Bill before the House. I forward you 'the Leeds Murcury' for tho I do not sympathize with Mr B in either his civil or ecclesiastical politics, I may defer to his exposition of a Public document - about which I confess I entertain the utmost alarm, shared by thousands in this neighbourhood. And the rather, since the suspicious source from which it emanates, has become a matter of some notoriety. It is in fact the production of Mr Kay Shuttleworth, from lists and documents furnished by Factory inspectors; and put together at the requests of the Bishops. I state it on undoubted authority. Now from such a source what may be anticipated? The BP. of London acts only in consistency with his avowed sentiments, in attempting to gain for the Church exclusive influence and the whole cannot scarcely be regarded as less than designed to upset our Institutions in the most populous districts of the nation, and to strike a blow as fatal (yet more insidious), as the Bill of Lord Sidmouth. The whole party publicly hold and avow that every thing good is to be discarded which cannot be brought within the Pale of the Establishment, and that all our efforts put forth during nearly a century in raising congregations and societies, building expensive places of worship and collecting thousands of children in Sunday Schools... ought to be swept aside to make an open platform for the full operation of the Oxford Tractarians." [45]

Farrar was concerned about the effect of the new measures on long standing Wesleyan ventures, particularly the Sunday Schools, and at the possible influence of the Oxford Movement on the new scheme, but there was more to it than that. His letter has echoes of the Methodist response to Brougham's proposals in 1821, long before the first Tract for the Times. Farrar objected to Blomfield's participation in drafting the educational clauses. Now Blomfield was no Tractarian, as his response to Tract 90 had shown;[46] Farrar's objection stemmed from the

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45 M.C.A. MSS. Abraham E Farrar to Jabez Bunting, 31 Mar. 1843. Cf. Ward, Early Victorian Methodism, p. 283.

46 O. Chadwick, op.cit., p.182. See also D.N.B.

Bishop of London's attempt to "gain for the Church exclusive influence." In other words, had there been no Oxford Movement there is no reason to believe that the Liverpool Methodist would have been any better disposed to Graham's Bill. Farrar's opposition led him to quote a name with which he did not ordinarily want to be associated, Edward Baines, "the great oracle of voluntaryism."[47] Baines had made his reputation in the 1830s by leading the non-conformist forces in opposition to Church Rates, an opposition which the Wesleyans had refused to join. Peel's comment that "Men, and the conduct of men, are much more the creatures of circumstances than they generally appear" is certainly apt.

After considering the Bill, the Committee of Privileges resolved to contact the Secretary of State for the Home Department to ask for a postponement of the second reading. Should Graham ignore their application then they would sanction widespread petitioning against the Bill. In the meantime a sub-committee was formed "to take such immediate steps as may be necessary to oppose the Bill in its present form."[48] As one might expect, Jabez Bunting was elected to this committee.

In fact the Bill was given its second reading on March 24th, but with the understanding that there would be an opportunity to discuss the clauses in more detail on a future occasion. In the debate Graham gave a concise summary of the principle of his Bill:

> "The object of the Government is to establish a system of education extensive in its operation, and not confined to any one religious sect and they invite the co-operation of the Church to enable them to carry it into effect, with a due regard to the principles of toleration, and with the respect which must be rendered to the honest scruples of Dissenters. I admit, that this object is difficult to attain."[49]

47 D. Frazer, "Edward Baines", in Pressure from Without in Early Victorian England, Patricia Hollis (ed.).
48 M.C.A. MSS. Committee of Privileges' Minutes.
49 Hansard, 3rd Ser. lxvii, 1439.

Just how difficult was made plain in the course of the debate. Graham had expected dissenting opposition and it now looked as if the Wesleyans were to join it. Hedworth Lambton, the member for North Durham, told the House that a 'leading Wesleyan' had asked him for a delay until after Easter.[50] Later in the debate Mr Ewart, the member for Dumfries, stated that "the Wesleyans who generally leaned with a kind of kindred feeling to the Church of England, had made their wishes known unfavourably to this Bill".[51] If the Church interest had made use of the Wesleyans in 1839 clearly the dissenting interest was not above using the same tactic.

On March 29th the Committee of Privileges was reconvened; the immediate aim had been achieved as Graham had postponed further action until after Easter. Once again letters from the regions were read out. Brown and Wood from Bristol, Joseph Taylor from Manchester and a letter from George Osborn containing resolutions of a "Meeting of the Manchester Ministers." Manchester was keeping up its tradition of political awareness.

The minutes of this meeting indicate just how efficient the Methodist 'machine' could be. The Committee of Privileges decided to convene a larger meeting on April 4th to work out Methodist policy but until then letters were sent out to the Circuit Superintendents asking them "to reserve any effort with reference to the Educational Clauses of the Factories Bill till such Meeting has been held and its conclusions communicated."[52] Such was the discipline within the connexion that this

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50 Ibid., 1418.

51 Ibid., 1422.

52 M.C.A. MSS. Committee of Privileges' Minutes.

request would probably me met. In the meantime a Wesleyan deputation was given an interview with Graham.[53]

The same day as the Committee of Privileges' meeting the Watchman made its first comment on Graham's Bill. The article, as expected, was unfavourable and it particularly objected to the privileged position of the Established Church:

> "Now, if the Church of England were at present what it was even a few years ago, when it was regarded as the grand bulwark of Protestentism in this country, we should have less objection to such arrangements as these." [54]

The writer suggested that if the clerical trustee were like Josiah Pratt, Mr Marks or Edward Bickersteth, then the situation might be "widely different". However all too often that "office would be filled by a disciple of the Tractarian sect who would employ his energies in opposition to sound Protestantism."[55]

The United Committee of Privileges and Education along with other ministers and laymen met for the third time on April 4th. The result of the meetings with Manners Sutton and Graham were communicated and then the sub-committee delivered the report on which it had been working since its inception two weeks before. It gave a clause by clause critique[56] of Graham's measures and was the basis for the Methodist printed statement on Public Education two days later, which was primarily the work of Jabez Bunting.[57] A vote of thanks was passed for his efforts in presenting "the rights and interests of the

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53 The Wesleyans saw Manners Sutton on 24 Mar. and Graham on 25 Mar. cf. Watchman, 29 Mar. 1843.

54 Watchman, 29 Mar. 1843.

55 Ibid.

56 M.C.A. MSS. Committee of Privileges' Minutes.

57 This is clearly shown to be the case in the minutes.

Wesleyan Body, in common with those of other Protestant non-conformists, vindicated, upon Constitutional and Catholic principles."[58] The Methodist opposition to Graham's Bill was led primarily by the United Committees of Privileges and Education. Within that committee a small sub-committee was particularly influential. Within that, Bunting was the guiding force; and such was his influence within the Connexion that the resolutions drawn up on April 6th, on which the Methodist Connexional agitation was based, were the resolutions of Bunting himself.

Bunting was prepared to accept that the situation in the manufacturing districts was so grim that an effective system of week-day education was essential, so he was more favourable to Graham's scheme than the Whig proposals four years earlier. The use of the Authorised Version of the Scriptures in all the schools had been secured and at the beginning and end of the school day the Lord's Prayer was to be said; "a devout acknowledgment of Almighty God." In principle, even if the details were unsatisfactory, religious instruction was to be given separately. There were very few concessions to Roman Catholics, a fact not unnoticed by some members of the House.[59] Besides, the Wesleyans had more confidence in the Conservative government ability to keep Roman Catholicism in check than in its predecessor.

Notwithstanding these points in favour of Graham's Bill, Bunting advised the Wesleyans to reject it for nine reasons.[60] Some were quite petty and left the government room for negotiation and compromise, but

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58 M.C.A. MSS. Committee of Privileges' Minutes, 6 Apr.

59 Hansard, 3rd Ser. lxvii, Speech of Milner Gibson, 1461.

60 Appendix.

there were more fundamental objections. The Wesleyans protested against the exclusiveness of the measure which virtually ensured that the Board of Trustees, Masters and Schools would be established on terms favourable to the Church of England. This was particularly disturbing because of the "growing intolerance of a certain sect of Churchmen."[61] The extent and bitterness of the pamphlet 'war' in 1842 had not been forgiven or forgotten. Bunting was also concerned about the effect of Graham's Bill on the Methodist voluntary efforts particularly the Sunday-Schools.

Despite these objections Bunting realised, as he had done in 1839, that the Wesleyans could not establish an effective day-school system on their own limited resources. He wanted the measure defeated, but he needed to choose his ground carefully, so that, if at all possible, the Wesleyans could still gain concessions from the government:

> "There are two propositions: (1) To oppose it in a sort of knockdown way, and thus join the Dissenters. This I think not the best; (2) To try to get the objectionable parts altered. I fear there is no prospect of doing this, but we shall be in a better state by having made the attempt... If this Bill be effectually resisted, we must be prepared to do more than we have done, and not keep our money in our pockets." 62

The United Committee decided to send Bunting's resolutions to the whole connexion and to recommend them as a basis for petitioning the House of Commons. The Watchman, obviously following the directions of the Committee of Privileges, encouraged the Wesleyans to bring the full power of their influence "to bear on this momentous question. Having taken full time for deliberation, they will now act calmly, but firmly, - and in their Connexional character."[63]

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61 Clause 3 of the objections.

62 Gregory, Sidelights p.512.

63 Watchman, 12 Apr. 1843.

By mid-April Graham realised that he had miscalculated. He had expected dissenting opposition but he had hoped for better from the Wesleyans. He told Peel that:

> "I have received the enclosed communication [probably the resolutions of April 6th] from the Wesleyan body with great regret. It is more hostile than I had anticipated, and marks distinctly a wide estrangement from the Church. It is quite clear that the Pusey tendencies of the Established Church have operated powerfully on the Wesleyans, and are converting them rapidly into enemies." 64

While Graham considered the difficulties facing his Bill, the political and religious forces in the country were working out their response to the Wesleyan switch from the Church camp to the Dissenters. The Times treated the Wesleyans scathingly;[65] gone was the common ground of hatred for O'Connell in the 1830s. The Dissenters were glad of a new ally but their overtures to the Wesleyans went unheeded and the two groups conducted their agitation separately.[66] In their public statements the Wesleyans preferred to use the term non-conformist as opposed to Dissenter, although Bunting confessed that he did not know which was the more accurate.[67] They still hoped for sympathy from the Evangelical Anglicans. At a Committee of Privileges' meeting Bunting announced that he would "deal kindly with the Evangelical party in the Church."[68] On April 12th the Watchman stated that "if the evangelical clergy and laity of the Established Church feel as they ought in this matter, they will be grateful to their Wesleyan brethren..."

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64 Graham to Peel, 13 Apr. 1843. Parker, op.cit., p.345.

65 An article from the Times was reprinted in the Watchman, 19 Apr. 1843.

66 B.L. Manning, The Protestant Dissenting Deputies (1952), pp.338-345.

67 Gregory, Sidelights, p.512.

68 Ibid., p.512.

McNeile showed that he was anything but grateful in a speech in Liverpool on April 27th. He claimed that the Established Church had the right to exclusive control of any revenue voted by Parliament for education. He appealed to the Wesleyans to retire from the work of education and leave it to the Clergy. The claims were provocative and a reply was written by William Vevers.[69] Vevers had been stationed in Liverpool during the heyday of the Protestant Association in 1840; "I, in common with others, have occasionally hung upon your lips, and have been delighted with your eloquence when you have been exposing in all their naked enormity, the absurdities, the cruelties and the arrogant pretensions of popery."[70] Vevers was now forced to the conclusion that McNeile could not be trusted as the advocate of Protestantism. In April 1843 the Record showed itself to be no more favourable to the Methodists than McNeile.[71] The comments of the Evangelical Churchmen only drove Methodism closer to Dissent.

Still unsure of Graham's plans, the United Committee met again on April 21st to continue the agitation. A circular was to be sent out to all the Circuits requesting the Methodists to see their representatives and a deputation was selected to wait upon the members for the City of London. A letter from the Leeds Methodists to their M.P.'s is worth quoting for its historical irony. After going through the standard Methodist objections they stated that they wanted protection from

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69 W. Vevers, The Claims of the Clergy: A Letter to the Rev. Hugh McNeile Being A Reply to his speech in the Amphitheatre, Liverpool. April 27, 1843, Addressed to the Wesleyan Methodists (Derby, 1843).

70 Ibid., p.18.

71 Watchman, 26 Apr. 1843.

"legalised proselytism",[72] precisely what the Irish Methodists and Bunting had campaigned for in Ireland.

The next meeting of the United Committee on April 26th was adjourned because Graham had consented to make some modifications in his scheme. Dissenting and Wesleyan pressure had borne some fruit, at least. Graham presented the alterations to the House on May 1st and he paid particular attention to the Wesleyan objections:

> "I shall now address myself to the principal objections urged against this measure; and if I am to seek for those which are presented in the most tangible and clear form, I naturally turn to the resolutions adopted by the Wesleyan Methodists. I am of opinion that the sentiments of Dissenters generally are worthy of consideration; but at the same time, considering the number of the Wesleyan denomination, their conduct as a body generally on the subject of education, and the immense efforts made by them with regard to the establishment of Sunday Schools in districts where such a system was wanted to supply the deficiency in imparting religious instruction, and where more wealthy but less active bodies had failed to meet the evil, I am bound to say, that I consider the objections emanating from such a source should be entertained with the greatest respect and receive the most deliberate consideration." [73]

Graham dealt with the threat to the Sunday-Schools; Wesleyan schools were to be able to grant certificates of attendance; the hour of specific instruction in the Catechism and Liturgy was to be at the beginning or end of the general instruction; the trusts were to have a different composition and only the headmaster could be vetoed by the Bishop. Graham made an attempt to meet dissenting (particularly Wesleyan) objections without changing the basic principles of the Bill.

The first Methodist response to the new measures came in the Watchman. The paper stated that the alterations were an improvement but were "far

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72 A Letter to the Hon. J. Stuart Wortley and Edmund Beckett Debison Esq., (Members of Parliament for the West Riding of the County of York) On the Educational Clauses of Sir James Graham's Factory Bill. from the Leeds Deputation, 26 Apr. 1843. See also second letter 9 June 1843.

73 Hansard, 3rd Ser. lxviii, 1107-1108.

from amounting to such a change as would satisfy the reasonable requirements of Wesleyans and Dissenters."[74] However the Connexional action would depend on the decision of the United Committee, due to meet on May 10th. At that meeting, the unanimity which had characterised the Wesleyan response thus far, was disturbed. Bunting, who was unable to attend, received this description from John Scott:

> "At the commencement the feeling was very strong, and by some of the speakers, expressed in no very measured terms, and our Leeds friends [Messrs. Scarth, Howard, John Burton and Dawson] were as warm as any - they seemed little inclined to allow Ministers credit for good intentions, and seemed disposed to urge us to declare against any combined system of Education, and in favour of Grants to Educational Societies, as the only practicable means of instructing the people. This seemed to be beyond our province, at least at present." 75

The Leeds group had obviously come under the influence of Baines and the Leeds Mercury. The Watchman had even begun to print Baines' speeches in its columns.

Some confusion had grown into the Methodist ranks and it is scarcely surprising. In 1839 Bunting, because of his fear of Roman Catholicism, had committed the Methodists to voluntaryism, if not in principle at least in practice. That was the ground taken by the Leeds laymen in 1843, only in principle as well as practice. Meanwhile Bunting, Scott and some other Ministers, with their fears of Roman Catholicism partly removed by a Conservative ministry and the assured use of the Authorised Version, were prepared to accept a system of united education with state support provided they could negotiate the right terms. The big stumbling block was the growth of the Oxford Movement which made the Church an untrustworthy ally. However,

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74 Watchman, 3 May 1843.

75 M.C.A. MSS. John Scott to Jabez Bunting, 13 May 1843. Ward, Early Victorian Methodism, p.286.

Wesleyan pressure had wrung concessions from Graham, if they kept going might they not get some more? For this policy to work, the character of the Wesleyan opposition needed to be carefully controlled. If they moved too close to Dissent then there was practically no chance of arriving at an agreement with the government.

The Wesleyan leadership was playing a tight game and the rest of the Connexion did not fully understand it, but for the moment all they had to do was what the Committee of Privileges told them. The Wesleyans in the country were needed only in so far as they put their signatures to the printed petitions which were sent to them through their Circuit Superintendents. Occasionally an independent voice was raised, as in a pamphlet entitled The Education Bill and the Wesleyans, by an anonymous Methodist. The pamphlet was written because the author refused to sign the Methodist petition circulated after Graham had outlined his first scheme.

> "You wish to provide, out of a State Fund, for a Religious Education, founded on the teaching of the Scriptures in the Protestant Version. You cannot pay the Roman Catholic because he will not use the Protestant Version. You cannot pay all Protestants indiscriminately, because you think you would, in that case, pay for many modes of Education, which would be irreligious and hurtful. You cannot practically adopt any principle of discrimination among Protestant sects, which would include the Wesleyans, and all other orthodox Nonconformists and exclude the rest... The Church is ready with its plan, or at least is ready to consent to the Government plan. The Dissenters are ready with the broad principle of the only plan for which they will, or can conscientiously, consent, - the equal right of all Sects calling themselves Religious to participate in a National Provision of Education. We must ultimately adopt either the Government principle or the Dissenting principle; and we differ from the latter essentially, and I trust, for ever." 76

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76 Anon., The Education Bill and the Wesleyans, being Reasons for Having Declined to sign the Wesleyan Petition against that Measure, Stated in a letter to a friend (London, 1843). Written on 24 Apr.

This pamphlet is perhaps the best written on the Methodist dilemma in the late 1830s and early 1840s and shows impeccably the religious and political position of Wesleyan Methodism sandwiched as it was between the traditional old foes, Church and Dissent. In that delicately poised position the line of most resistance to Popery was the determining factor. The twin enemies, Roman Catholicism and Oxford Tractarianism, were the forces operating on Wesleyan political alignment.

The United Committee meeting on May 10th, eventually ended harmoniously[77] and a number of resolutions were adopted.[78] The Wesleyans acknowledged the attention which their previous objections had received but "the general character of the Bill has not undergone any material change; and that the greater number of the most weighty objections against it remain in full force."[79] The Methodists still objected to the constitution of the Board of Trustees and to the "narrow and exclusive character of the particular object to be accomplished by the Bill." The negotiable parts of the Bill had been negotiated and the rest was patently not for sale. Graham could do nothing about the Oxford Movement "whose Popish doctrines and practices all sound Protestants must regard with abhorrence and alarm."[80]

The United Committee had reached its decision, but the grounds for opposition needed to be softened. In the petition which it drew up it was suggested that as soon as possible "a well-considered measure for General Education, on the basis of regular Scriptural Instruction, and

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77 M.C.A. MSS. Scott to Bunting, 13 May 1843.

78 Printed sheet in the Minutes of the Committee of Privileges.

79 Ibid., Resolution 1.

80 Ibid., Resolution 2. part 5.

on just, tolerant, and liberal principles, may be brought forward and adopted; after reasonable time shall have been afforded for that due communication with all the parties principally interested in this great question..."[81] In the meantime the Wesleyans asked for an increased grant to be placed at the disposal of the Committee of Privy Council so that they could have more ample assistance.

The Wesleyan ministers were still angling for more concessions but the government decided it could give no more.[82] The Methodist leadership had no alternative but to call "upon the Connexion to forward Petitions without further delay." A deputation consisting of Bunting, Scott, Beecham, Alder, Farmer and Matthews was appointed to wait on Peel and Graham "to seek for the withdrawal of the Educational Clauses of the Bill."

In a moving speech in the Commons on June 15th Graham withdrew his educational proposals:

> "I looked for peace, and I have encountered the most angry opposition, therefore I withdraw the educational clauses, although I take that step with deep regret, and with melancholy forebodings with regard to the progress of education." [83]

Russell asked if the Government meant to follow the Wesleyan suggestion and bring forward another measure in the next session,[84] to which Graham answered no.

The Home Secretary's educational clauses had solicited enormous parliamentary petitioning. 25,205 petitions with 3,988,633 signatures were presented against the Bill of which 8,945 petitions and 910,000

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81 The wording of the United Committee petition, 10 May 1843.

82 M.C.A. MSS. Committee of Privileges' Minutes, 30 May 1843.

83 Hansard, 3rd Ser. lxix, 1569.

84 Ibid., 1570.

signatures were from the Wesleyan Methodists alone.[85] The victory of 1843 was achieved by extra-parliamentary pressure, because except on a motion by Roebuck, the House never divided on the question. Even if Graham had carried the Bill, he was well aware that it could not have been put into effect. The United Committee met on June 20 when its last resolution on the Factory Bill was drawn up. It was appropriate:

> "The Committee express their thankfulness for the unanimity of the Wesleyan Methodists on this important occasion; for the Christian temper in which their opposition had been conducted; and for their confidence in the Committee, by delaying, in deference to their request, such opposition, notwithstanding many exciting inducements to a contrary course; - from which has resulted that well-timed and constitutional manifestation of disapproval and alarm, which, in connexion with opposition from other Religious Bodies, has, by the Divine blessing, terminated in the present gratifying result."[86]

The Methodist effort was superbly co-ordinated. Deputations were sent to members of the Commons to find out the likely course of political events. They reported back to the United Committee at regular intervals as did the sub-committee which sat almost continuously. When the time was just right, petitions were circulated throughout the Connexion. The Committee closely controlled the weekly articles in the Watchman,[87] giving the agitation greater cohesion. Wesley's genius for organisation clearly lived on. The effectiveness of the Methodist opposition can be measured by Graham's speech in the Commons on May 1.

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85 Wesleyan Education Reports (1843). p.18.

86 Resolution 4, Printed Resolutions drawn up on 20 June 1843. In Committee of Privileges' Minutes.

87 M.C.A. MSS. On 20 june the committee resolved "That an advertisement be inserted in the Watchman Newspaper restraining further opposition to the Bill."

The Dissenters through the Deputies had also carried on a strong opposition. On June 21, Hull Terrell, the secretary of the committee, asked the Wesleyans through the Committee of Privileges to attend a 'victory' meeting, at which future plans could be discussed.[88] The Methodists were ready to leave the Church but they were not yet ready to join Dissent. Charles Prest tactfully declined on the grounds that the meeting "Would scarcely be restrained from exciting feelings of resentment towards parties associated with the late measure as its framers, or supporters, or both; and as we deprecate such feeling, the excitement of it we think it desirable not to risk."[89]

The Wesleyans had helped defeat the educational clauses but they still wanted government support; it would not do to celebrate victory too heartily.

As in 1839, in educational terms the Wesleyan victory of 1843 was a pyrrhic one. In 1843 the Methodists had only 290 day schools with 20,804 scholars,[90] and Bunting realised that the present provision, in relation to the need, was hopelessly inadequate:

> "Let us make no farce about day school education; we must have more money if it is to be done. In the estimation of public men Sunday schools are not national education. I am of that opinion. Why not admit this to ourselves?... Let us establish day schools... Let us go body, soul, and spirit into it." [91]

In October 1843 John Scott carried a motion committing the Wesleyans to the provision of seven hundred schools in seven years. The progress over the next few years was commendable but painfully slow:

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88 M.C.A. MSS. Committee of Privileges' Minutes 27 June 1843.

89 Ibid.

90 Wesleyan Education Reports (1843), p.20.

91 Gregory, Sidelights, p.352.

1844 -	332	daily	schools	with	25,463	scholars	
1845 -	331	"	"	"	30,686	"	
1846 -	370	"	"	"	34,285	"	
1847 -	395	"	"	"	37,341	"	92

It was clear that by voluntary efforts alone, the Wesleyans could not meet their own objectives, quite apart from the enormous need. By 1846-47 the Committee of Council had prepared further minutes which were submitted to Parliament in February. When Russell gave notice of his intention to move the vote for education on April 19 the Methodist United Committees met once again to plan the opposition. A series of resolutions were drawn up embodying the old objections. Would the authorised version be used? If the new schoolmasters should be "Clergymen of the Church of Rome, these Committees would feel an insuperable objection to the gradual introduction of such a body of Ecclesiastics under cover of a plan of Education."[93] The Wesleyans were still suspicious of the principle of state inspection which they thought meant state harassment. While the United Committees were considering these resolutions, Lord Ashley arrived at the Centenary Hall and requested an interview with John Scott.[94] Ashley wanted the Methodists to temper their resistance because he was assured that the government would make concessions. Scott returned to the meeting after the interview and changed the whole tone of the debate. The result was an adjournment until April 9 to give the United Committees time to assess the new developments. In the meantime Ashley wrote to Bunting to impress upon him

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92 Figures taken from Wesleyan Education Reports.

93 Wesleyan Education Reports (1847). Appendix 2. pp.51-56.

94 H.F. Mathews, Methodism and the Education of the People (1949). pp.135-137. Also Ward, Religion and Society, pp.249-251.

"the importance of putting your inquiries in the most friendly manner; of assuming, as it were, that your difficulties will receive a candid attention and satisfactory explanation. I urge this the more earnestly because I am assured that such will be the case..."[95]

On April 5 the secretary of the Wesleyan United Committees wrote to the Marquis of Lansdowne, Lord President of the Committee of Council on Education asking for more time.[96] In his reply Lansdowne indicated that Ashley's intervention was recognised if not authorised by the government. Both sides were cordially exploring the possibilities of a compromise if the terms were right. The slow progress of the Wesleyans in establishing their own schools had prepared the ground and Bunting and Scott had shown themselves willing to negotiate with the government in the past.

On April 7, Lansdowne, after consultation with Russell, authorised a reply to the Wesleyans. The points of compromise were clearly set out by Kay Shuttleworth:[97]

(1) "It has always been intended by the Committee of Council that... the entire Bible in the authorized version, should be required to be in use in Schools aided by Public Grants."

(2) "The Lordships have hitherto made no provision for the extension of aid to Roman Catholic Schools;" should such provision be made in future , "these further Minutes, when presented, will make a separate provision for Roman Catholic Schools, and will in no degree unsettle the basis on which aid is now granted to other Schools."

(3) "Their Lordships desire to assure you that they are anxious to appoint, as Inspectors of Wesleyan Schools, such persons only as may obtain the confidence and support of the Education Committee of the Wesleyan Conference."

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95 Ashley to Bunting, 3 Apr. 1847. Ward, Early Victorian Methodism, p.353.

96 Wesleyan Education Reports (1847), Appendix 2. pp.49-50.

97 Ibid., pp.61-67.

There was to be no attempt to take education out of the Churches' hands or to make education merely secular. If the Wesleyans accepted the government terms then the "Wesleyan Connexion would be admitted to the benefits of the Public Grants." From the Methodist viewpoint the terms were as good as any government was likely to give. The deadlock was broken because the government decided to make separate provisions for the Wesleyans and the Roman Catholics. An all embracing scheme had proved to be an illusion.

On April 9 the United Committees met in Manchester but it was decided to adjourn while the negotiations with the government continued. The mood of its Resolution was promising.[98] Five days later a deputation from the United Committees was given an interview with Russell and Lansdowne. Two days after that the Wesleyans convened another meeting in London, at which, resolutions favourable to the government Minutes were drawn up. The United Committees made use of a clever device to prevent further connexional opposition:

> "That, in reference to some other objections stated in their Resolutions of the 1st instant, the United Committees are clearly of opinion that those reasons, being grounded rather on civil and political than strictly religious considerations, would not of themselves justify them in calling upon the body of Wesleyan Methodists, as a religious community, to offer a combined and organized opposition to the measure." 99

The old no politics rule was invoked again to guide connexional politics and Bunting inspired the caucus which was drawing the boundaries. The Wesleyans left the other dissenting groups high and dry, and they "had done so for a price."[100] The Methodists had been on the

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98 Ibid., p.67.

99 Ibid., p.74.

100 Ward, Religion and Society, p.251.

Church's side in 1839 and then with the Dissenters in 1843, and now showed in 1847 what their intentions had been all along; to achieve the best possible terms for themselves regardless of allies. In negotiating these terms the basic principle was to obtain state aid for Wesleyan Connexional Schools or schools not antithetic to Methodist doctrines while at the same time trying to exclude Roman Catholicism and Unitarianism from similar benefits. The narrowness of this can be easily criticised now, but at the time the Wesleyans were convinced that they stood for the preservation of truth against the whole spectrum of heresy from Roman Catholicsm and Tractarianism to Socinianism. The Methodists were religiously and politically midway between Church and Dissent and could be heroes or anti-heroes to either depending on circumstance. Gladstone and Acland spoke in their favour in 1839 and the Dissenting Deputies in 1843.

The politics of the Wesleyan leadership were not always understood by the Connexion as a whole and tensions inevitably arose. At the 1848 Conference in Hull, Beaumont, Osborn and William Bunting attacked Wesleyan educational policy because they were receiving government money in common with Roman Catholics. The answer came of course from Jabez Bunting, but it was not the answer that he would have given in 1832:

> "The state of the case is this: Ultra Dissenters say that all State aided education should be secular; the country says: 'We cannot recognise any system as education of which the Christian religion does not form an essential part; we have not an absolute right to say that Roman Catholics shall use our authorised version, or to say that Roman Catholic schools are too bad to be dealt with like others. We have gained a national recognition of the principle that the Scriptures and the doctrines of our religion shall be an essential part of British education, and that no Popish priest can be a master in these schools!' "101

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101 Gregory, Sidelights, pp.428-429.

APPENDIX

The Objections of the United Committees of Privileges and Education adopted on April 6, 1843, to Graham's Factory Education Proposals.

1. The manifestly partial, narrow, and exclusive character of the particular object which would be accomplished by this scheme, which would be, evidently, the multiplication, and support, to a certain extent, by means of a Public and General Fund, (such as is the Poor's Rate), of Schools, which in their primary and leading character would really be Church-Schools.

   An Enlargement, by additional Parliamentary liberality, of the Grant now annually placed at the disposal of the Lord's Committee of Privy Council, enabling that Committee to open its doors more freely to present claimants, and more widely to Societies and Schools now unrecognised by it, - and that on Scriptural but yet tolerant terms, so that both Churchmen and Nonconformists might, on those terms, receive an equitable share of the public help, at least for the secular education of the children of their own professed members, and of any other children whose Parents might prefer and seek admission into their Schools respectively, - would seem to have been a simpler and juster method of extending Education to the yet neglected masses of our youth.

2. The unfair and unsafe Constitution of the Boards of Trustees. These would in most cases be all Churchmen, or composed of a predominant majority of Churchmen. Other Denominations might not, in a country professing to maintain Religious Liberty to be placed in such circumstances...

3. The power and influence given to the Clerical Trustee amount to almost entire control, and will afford, in cases innumerable, the opportunity of vexatious and harassing proceedings towards Nonconformist Parents and Children, such as no general and vague prohibition of "punishment or molestation" can ever prevent. There are many excellent Clergymen from whom nothing unchristian or intentionally unkind could be apprehended. But there are many others from whom various forms of annoyance, most offensive and troublesome, might be justly feared: as numerous instances of unworthy and contumelious deportment towards our Body have recently proved. The growing intolerance of a certain sect of Churchmen is too notorious to be denied and we have a right publicly to complain of it, and to guard against its obtaining under the pretext of Education any additional facilities of development. On still higher grounds, the excessive power and influence given by the Bill to Clerical Trustees, indiscriminately must be regarded by us with alarm. The Popish Doctrines, superstitious Practices, and unfairly proselyting operations, of the powerful and active Sect referred to, make it matter of doubt whether conscientious Protestants, attached to the real principles of the Reformation, can consistently consent, even for soo good an object as that of

General Education, to be now for the first time brought under a new form of Taxation, the product of which these Anti-Protestants would have, in many places, under their almost unchecked control and administration.

4. [The clerical trustee could select the hour for specific religious instruction in the catechism at any time during the day. The Methodists wanted it either at the beginning or end of secular instruction].

5. The power of Dismissal of a child from the proposed Schools, given to the Board of Trustees, and in certain cases to even less than three of the Trustees, and by possibility to the Clerical Trustee alone, is a provision most oppressive, and sure to be greatly abused.

6. [The terms for exempting children from the specific religious instruction of the trustee were unsatisfactory. The Wesleyans were not provided for in that respect nor in any other portion of the Bill].

7. The inevitable operation of this Bill, if ever carried into execution, will be greatly to diminish the resources, to paralyze the exertions, and eventually in many cases, actually to undermine and destroy the usefulness, of those existing Schools which have been chiefly or wholly erected, and are now supported, by the voluntary zeal and liberality of benevolent Societies or Individuals;

8. The tendency of these New Schools, if the principle and plan laid down in the present Bill were generally or extensively adopted, would be greatly to injure, if not often totally to destroy, the efficiency of thousands of Sunday-Schools.

9. [The new Bill was inadequate in dealing with the education of female children].

IX

PEEL, MAYNOOTH AND EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE

"I think you are but acting in accordance with the original implied engagement of the Irish Parliament if you supply increased means for ecclesiastical education in that country."

Sir Robert Peel in the Commons, Feb. 4, 1845. [1]

"Let them have a college, if they like; but let them pay for it."

Jabez Bunting at a London Wesleyan Meeting, April 25, 1845. [2]

Graham's factory education proposals had not done much to enhance Peel's ministry to Methodists but they had not damaged it much either. After all, Peel and Graham could not reasonably be held accountable for the theological bias at Oxford. However, Methodist suspicions had been aroused and Peel's ecclesiastical patronage was to be closely monitored. The Watchman urged that no Puseyite should obtain promotion "but that men of decidedly Protestant principles shall be sought out and honoured."[3] The Wesleyans were on fairly safe ground. Peel had already suffered at the hands of the Anglo-Catholics after his address on education at the opening of the Tamworth reading room. Under the pseudonym "Catholicus", Newman wrote a number of critical letters to the Times and the British Critic followed up the attack. Peel's politics were cruelly and sarcastically condemned:

"The whole career of this statesman has been one continual defalcation". [4]

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1 Hansard, 3rd Ser. lxxvii, 84.

2 Watchman, 30 Apr. 1845.

3 Watchman, 17 May 1843.

4 British Critic, xxx (1841), p.64.

> "We cannot help fearing that if all the Institutes [Mechanics'] in the kingdom were to putrify into 'operative conservative clubs', and in that happy state of perfection were able to turn the scale at the elections, Sir Robert would be last to deplore so sad a reverse to the cause of science." [5]

"Peel would never and could never use his patronage to promote a Puseyite",[6] but he was no evangelical so the Wesleyans were unlikely to see the elevation of men with "sound Protestant principles." Most of his preferments were from the "safe" middle ground, as there was little to be gained from unnecessary ecclesiastical antagonism. Apart from the appointment of Gilbert to Chichester and Peel's firmness over the Welsh bishoprics, the Wesleyans were not very enthusiastic about his policy but they had no reason to be alarmed. Their sense of disillusionment was to come from two other directions; the long standing fear of Socinianism and Roman Catholicism. In the last analysis Peel would be judged on his attitude toward the unorthodox English Dissenters and the Irish Roman Catholics.

The early states of the administration's dealings with Ireland were fairly innocuous. Graham wrote to De Grey in November 1841 stating that Maynooth and Roman Catholic education "form the most difficult problem of practical government" in Ireland.[7] Apart from personal friction in the new team of Irish officials the two problems which faced Peel before 1843 were these; the Anglicans, who had become increasingly unhappy with the Irish National Education system, asked for a separate grant for the Church Education Society, and the Catholic hierarchy was dissatisfied with the inadequate grant to Maynooth College. Both demands were potentially controversial and Peel took the line of least resistance.

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5 Ibid., p.86.

6 O. Chadwick, The Victorian Church, 1 p.226.

7 Graham to De Grey Nov. 27, 1841. Quoted K.B. Nolan, The Politics of Repeal (1965). p.33.

He was unwilling to tackle the complex problems of Ireland so early in the life of his ministry. He was well aware that more than one administration had been severely weakened by Irish difficulties in the nineteenth century.[8]

The government had other important problems, and so legislation and administration for Ireland were kept to a minimum.[9] Into the vacuum created by this subdued policy stepped O'Connell and the Repeal agitation. The Repeal Association after initial difficulties had, by 1843, developed into a numerically strong and cohesive movement. The apparent coalition of radical nationalists, Catholic clergy and bishops, peasantry, and educated laity, was a stern challenge to the government. On May 9 Peel made a strong speech in the House stating that the government would do everything in its power to maintain the union. In spite of outward strength Peel was unhappy with the situation in Ireland, but he was unwilling to use unnecessary coercion because of its usual boomerang effect. However, the government could no longer ignore O'Connell's "monster" meetings and in October 1843 the meeting at Clontarf was banned and O'Connell was arrested.

The Watchman, which in common with the Irish Tories, had been unhappy with the government's forbearance, was delighted:

> "The course upon which the Government have entered must be persevered in with steadiness; for, to falter - to retrace a step - would now be ruinous." [10]

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8 See Hansard, 3rd Ser. lxxix, 1014-1015, for a concise historical survey in a speech by Lord John Russell.

9 See Nowlan, op.cit., Chapter 2, "The Challenge of Repeal", pp.37 f. also, N. Gash, Sir Robert Peel, Chapter 12, "The Serbonian Bog", pp.393f.

10 Watchman, 18 Oct. 1843.

For the Wesleyan paper, the repeal of the Union was nothing but the "overthrow of Protestantism." If the English Methodists needed any encouragement to hold on to the principle of union they received it in a speech from Thomas Waugh, the Irish representative at the conference in 1843:

> "Ireland is in danger of being surrendered to Popery. But we have no wish for a repeal of the union, either with the British crown of the British Conference... You need not fear the issue. Protestant Ireland will be faithful to England... We occupy a position of great importance." 11

Politically the Methodists had nothing to fear from the repeal agitation because Peel and the British parliament had no intention of conceding it. Until the beginning of 1844 the Wesleyans had no reason to distrust Peel's Irish policy apart from his unwillingness to use coercion as strongly as they would have liked. However Peel and the cabinet were already in the process of re-thinking their Irish policy. With O'Connell defeated the time seemed opportune for detaching moderate Irish Catholics from the agitation by concession. The areas of concession were to be the franchise, education and Roman Catholic endowments.

The reform of the franchise proved more difficult than expected and was dropped but the Charitable Trusts Bill had a happier fate. The basic aim of the Bill was to stimulate private endowment of catholic clergy. Charities in Ireland had been administered by a board established by the old Irish parliament, and was almost exclusively protestant. The new Bill provided for a board of thirteen members on which the Catholics would be amply represented.

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11 Gregory, Sidelights, p.347.

The Charitable Donations and Bequest Act was a peace offering gone wrong. The Irish Catholic hierarchy had not been consulted beforehand and were piqued. But their opposition was nothing to the Watchman's which reckoned that the Act was "indicative of the disposition becoming increasingly apparent to attempt, in every possible way, the profitless endeavour to conciliate Popery."[12]

Some of Peel's statements in the debate on Wyse's motion with reference to education in Ireland, gave even greater cause for concern. The Watchman sensed that an increased endowment of Maynooth College was in the pipeline. Its opinion on such a course of action was explicit:

> "If Sir R. Peel imagines that he can really conciliate the Irish priests, and make them loyal to a Protestant Government, he may live to find out his mistake; for mistaken he assuredly is." [13]

1844 was not a happy year for the politics of the Watchman. The Charitable Bequest Act, an increased endowment of Irish national education, the failure to prosecute O'Connell and rumours about the further endowment of Maynooth disturbed Methodist confidence in Peel's administration. The Wesleyans were also bewildered by the apparently insatiable demands of Irish catholicism and the inability of successive governments to remain firm:

> "British legislators have granted much to Irish Papists, as such, within the last sixteen years. Have they satisfied them? The question seems a withering mockery. Would an extension of the franchise? – an increase of representation in the Imperial Parliament? – a concordat with Rome? – the exaltation of Maynooth to the rank of University? – the endowment of the Priesthood? – the admission of Romish Bishops to the House of Lords? – or any similar measures?" [14]

One can sense here despair. Each concession was a prelude to a

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12 Watchman, 7 Aug. 1844.

13 Ibid.

14 Watchman, 8 Jan. 1845.

fresh demand. Concessions were not received with thanks but grasped as rights with complaints about the extent of the favour. Grey's Irish Church Bill had not ended the attack on the Establishment; the Catholic hierarchy was increasingly unhappy with Irish national education and they had protested about the terms of the Charitable Bequests Bill. The crux of the matter was this; the Irish Catholic leadership demanded rights commensurate with the population under its control and the evangelical protestants could not admit that their mission to Ireland had failed.

The Wesleyans were consistent to their protestant principles throughout the nineteenth century. What had changed was the character of Irish Catholicism and therefore what was politically feasible. The theory of the Protestant Constitution was gone for ever; the absolute had been replaced by the relative. The Evangelicals were as opposed to relativity in politics as in theology. To repeat the "Veverian dilemma" a thing was either right or wrong. The mid-ground was compromise and that was a dirty word. It was with these principles that the Wesleyans greeted Peel's speech on Feb. 4, 1845. The Maynooth grant was not to be accompanied "by any regulation with respect to the doctrine, discipline, or management of the college, which can diminish the grace and favour of the grant."[15]

The Methodists had always been hostile to the Maynooth grant since its inception in 1795. The Royal College of St. Patrick at Maynooth had been established to prevent the flow of Irish seminarists to France and since 1808 it had received £9,250 per year from Parliament.[16] Sporadic

15 Hansard, 3rd Ser. lxxvii, 84.

16 See E.R. Norman, Anti-Catholicism in Victorian England (1967), pp.23-51. and E.R. Norman, "The Maynooth Question of 1845", Irish Historical Studies, xv (1966-67), pp.407-435.

resistance to the grant continued until the mid-1830s when the Protestant Associations were formed:

> "Englishmen in the nineteenth century had their traditional and historical prejudgements, predispositions, biases, and beliefs nurtured by new villains, characters, slogans, and symbols - O'Connell, Popish priests and bishops, Maynooth, Peter Dens and the Irish Plot." [17]

The protest against the Maynooth grant in particular soon became a major element in the agitation of the Protestant Association. Hugh McNeile was invited to speak at the anniversary meeting in May 1839 and stated that an "important sphere of your Committee's operations has been its endeavour to obtain justice from the Legislature by public petitions, against the Popish College of Maynooth."[18]

Because of the increasing Wesleyan identification with the Protestant Association in the late 1830s, the Maynooth grant became more of a grievance to the Methodists also. In August 1838 the Watchman[19] gave its support to the attempts by Sibthorp, Perceval, Verner and Gladstone to get the grant abolished. In 1839 the speeches of McGhee and O'Sullivan at Exeter Hall were quoted by the Watchman to show that the priests at Maynooth were trained "in a system of perjury, persecution, sedition, and unrelenting hostility to their Protestant Sovereign and Protestant fellow-subjects."[20] In March 1841 James Dixon represented the Wesleyans at a meeting in Freemason's Hall to support Colqhoun's motion "to dissolve the existing connection between the state and the Roman Catholic College of Maynooth."[21] Dixon argued that Roman Catholicism was not the humble beggar of 1795 so the agreement made then was no longer valid.

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17 G.A. Cahill, "The Protestant Association and the Anti-Maynooth Agitation of 1845", The Catholic Historical Review, xliii (Oct. 1957), pp.273-308.
18 The Third Annual Report of the Protestant Association (1839), p.13.
19 Watchman, 1 Aug. 1838.
20 Watchman, 15 May, 1839.
21 Watchman, 24 Mar. 1841 and 31 Mar. 1841.

With the election of Peel and the withdrawal of large-scale Wesleyan support from the Protestant Association, anti-Maynooth feeling lay dormant until Peel's announcement in February 1845. Immediately after that Dr. Bennett wrote a series of articles for the Watchman which formed the theoretical basis of the Wesleyan opposition.[22] Bennett denied that there was a compact for a permanent national endowment of Maynooth by examining the three relevant statutes, 35 George 3rd c.23 (1795), 40 George 3rd c.85 (1800) and 48 George 3rd c.145 (1808). Even if there was any kind of pledge "we cannot admit that an engagement to do wrong, - whether entered into by our forefathers or by ourselves, - has any morally binding force."[23] The Methodist passed on to the character of the instruction at Maynooth which he held to be immoral, intolerant, seditious and persecuting. The basis of his argument was this:

> "Lest we should be misunderstood, we wish to state, with all distinctness, that our hostility is not based upon the dislike to the mere augmentation of the amount of patronage extended to Maynooth College, but an abhorrence of the principle of extending to it any Protestant patronage at all." [24]

The Methodist colours were nailed to the mast with a characteristic argument. Religious principle was at stake, not mere political or financial expediency. Unlike the opposition to Graham's educational proposals, there was no room for negotiation; it was all or nothing.

In late February 1845 the committee of the Protestant Association called a meeting in Exeter Hall at which a standing committee was formed to whip up opposition to the Maynooth grant. Charles Prest,[25]

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22 Maynooth College; Its Teaching and its Endowment, being the substance of a series of leading articles extracted from the Watchman newspaper (London, 1845).

23 Ibid., p.4.

24 Ibid., p.12.

25 The Ms. diary of the Rev. Charles Prest is in the possession of John Prest, Balliol College, Oxford.

the secretary of the Methodist Committee of Privileges was a member and Bunting's name was added three days later. On March 18 J.P. Plumptre chaired a meeting at Exeter Hall. A number of well known Evangelicals were present including Noel, Bickersteth, Culling Eardley Smith and Chalmers. The Methodists were represented by Prest and Cubitt, the men who answered O'Connell in 1839.[26] Thus far the Methodist opposition had been conducted through the columns of the Watchman, through the broader work of the Protestant Association and in isolated local protests but the Connexion as a whole had been given no direction. This was not surprising. In the first 100 years of Methodism the Connexion as a body had only come forward twice on matters relating to politics; Lord Sidmouth's Bill and the campaign against slavery. In the following four years there had been two further connexional protests in 1839 and 1843. It was not easy to engage on another agitation so soon, especially in opposition to an administration from which so much had been hoped.

The Committee of Privileges met on March 28 and the Wesleyans were committed to another extra-parliamentary protest. The resolutions drawn up by the committee were unmistakably religious and employed religious vocabulary:

> "This Meeting, therefore, must consciously regard all national countenance and support given to such a system by the State, as a national sin against Almighty God, and as likely to bring down upon this professedly Protestant country the visitations of His righteous displeasure." 27

If the objections were religious, the means of protest were to be political and once again the Wesleyan societies and congregations were

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26 Ms. diary of Charles Prest.

27 Resolution 2, Committee of Privileges' Minutes, 1845.

called upon to petition parliament. On April 2, the day before Peel announced his proposals in the House, the Watchman carried an article which throws some light on Wesleyan attitudes at this juncture:

> "We are free to confess that, for some time, we were unfriendly to the plan of coming forward denominationally in the present instance. We apprehended that each successive movement of a denominational character might weaken the influence of such movements; and we hoped that, on such a question as this, a common ground might be discovered, on which all Protestants could unite, not merely in opposition to the measure, but in the very terms in which that opposition should be expressed. But we have been compelled, although very reluctantly, to abandon this hope. The more rigid portion of our dissenting friends would agree to no form of Petition in which the Anti-State-Church principle was not made prominent." 28

The Wesleyans had already come across the Voluntaryist-non Voluntaryist split which was to bedevil the Anti-Maynooth agitation.

Peel expounded the details of his long awaited measure to the Commons on April 3. The annual grant was to be raised to £26,000 with a special advance of £30,000 for new buildings. Peel's justifying arguments were simple and cogent; he put three possibilities to the House. Parliament could continue without alteration to the present system, it could discontinue the grant altogether or the Parliamentary provision could be extended in a "friendly and generous spirit."[29] The first was the most unsatisfactory because the government was getting the worst of both worlds. The existing grant committed Parliament to the principle of endowment while its inadequacy prevented the desired objectives from being accomplished. Peel also dismissed the second alternative. If George 3rd, Pitt, and the exclusively protestant Irish Parliament could vote a grant to Maynooth why could they not, fifty

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28 Watchman, 2 Apr. 1845.

29 Hansard, 3rd Ser. lxxix, 459.

years later? It would be dishonourable to engage on such a policy. For Peel the third program was the only reasonable one. The House obviously thought so too because despite the opposition of Inglis, Plumptre and other ultra-Protestants, Peel was given leave to bring in the Bill by a majority of 102.[30]

The Watchman was bewildered and concerned about the size of the majority:

> "Twenty years ago, what would have been thought of the sanity of the man who predicted that a Minister, calling himself Protestant and Conservative, would venture to lay such a proposal before the British Legislature;" [31]

The paper realised that the majority was so large that petitioning, by itself, would not prevent the passage of the Bill. There was concern also about the implication of Russell's speech, not refuted by Peel, that the endowment of Maynooth was but the prelude to a much wider endowment of the Catholic priesthood.

The Wesleyan leadership was now a little uncertain about the best course of action. The Committee of Privileges had asked the Connexion to petition but it was sufficiently adroit politically to realise that other measures were needed. In any case some members of Parliament had become suspicious of Wesleyan petitions. Stanley stated in the Lords on April 11 that the "petitions from the Wesleyans were all verbatim the same;"[32] The implication was obvious.

The Methodists through their Committee of Privileges' secretaries, Prest and Stamp, were still keeping their finger on the pulse of the

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30 Ibid., 108

31 Watchman, 9 Apr. 1845.

32 Hansard, 3rd Ser. lxxix, 459.

wider Anti-Maynooth agitation; mainly through the meetings of the central Anti-Maynooth Committee at the London Coffee House. Bunting, by a remarkable coincidence was President of the Conference for the year 1844-5 as he had been in 1828-9, and he was kept in touch by Prest. On April 7 the secretary informed Bunting that a deputation from the Anti-Maynooth committee had been appointed to wait upon Peel. The committee recommended that other Protestant groups should do likewise. Prest was unwilling to commit the Methodists without the President's sanction and wrote that "we must, just now, be as cautious as determined."[33]

On April 11 the matter became more urgent when Peel moved the second reading of the Bill. The debate lasted six nights and all possible arguments were used and positions taken up. The liberal Conservatives, Whigs and Irish were opposed by the ultra-Protestants and the Radicals. The opposition to Peel in the House was split along the same lines as in the country. Some opposed the grant because of a dislike of Popery, others because of a dislike of endowments. The opposition of Bright, Disraeli, Ward and Inglis could not be very cohesive. In a speech on the fourth night of the debate Bright was provoked by an anti-catholic tirade from Viscount Bernard to state his objection to the Bill: "that it proposed to vote some of the public taxes for the purpose of maintaining an institution purely ecclesiastical, and for the rearing and educating of the priests of a particular sect."[34]

The six-day debate offered little hope to the anti-Maynooth agitation outside the House. Almost all the influential parliamentary figures

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33 M.C.A. MSS. Charles Prest to Jabez Bunting, 7 Apr. 1845.

34 Hansard, 3rd Ser. lxxix, 818.

were committed to the Bill's passage. The Anglican Evangelical, Bickersteth fitted the debate into his eschatological scheme:

> "Peel's speech is worldly conservatism, Gladstone's is superstitious Romanism, Roebuck's infidel liberalism - the three unclean spirits of this day (Rev. 16,13), all perfectly opposed to the word of God, which abides for ever." [35]

The Commons' division on the second reading of the Bill produced another big majority of 147. 148 Conservatives voted for the Bill and 161 against while 164 Whig-liberals supported the government. The Wesleyans, who had been so prominently in the debates of 1839 and 1843 figured only in a snide remark by Sheil.[36]

During the debate on the second reading, opposition outside Parliament continued unabated. On April 14 Bunting attended a public meeting of the Citizens of London in the London Tavern.[37] On the same evening Dixon and Prest attended a similar meeting in Covent-Garden theatre.[38]

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35 T.R. Birks, Memoir of the Rev. Edward Bickersteth ii, p.297.

36 "And those Wesleyans who, whenever an act of severity, an abridgment of Irish liberty, has been propounded, have been the backers of domination; but when a measure of plain justice is brought forward, rise up against us in a mass of fanatical insurgency, pile petitions on the Table of this House of Commons in which 'idolatry' recurs in almost every line, and in a great anti-Catholic and anti-Irish demonstration, to feelings the most unchristian, because they are the most uncharitable, contumaciously give way. I am not, however, very much surprised at the conduct of the Wesleyan Methodists."
R.L. Sheil, Hansard, 3rd Ser. lxxix, 980.

37 A.S. Thelwall, Proceedings of the Anti-Maynooth Convention (1845).

38 Ms. diary of Charles Prest.

Up in Manchester, the Wesleyan Societies of Manchester and Salford met to consider the Maynooth Bill.[39] On April 15 Prest attended another protest meeting in Surrey Chapel.[40] In Prest's diary at this stage the same names keep reappearing: Plumptre, Noel, Bickersteth, Blackburn, Chalmers, E.C. Smith, Thelwall, Bunting and Dixon. The Evangelicals were gradually coming together in a united opposition to catholicism.

The Anti-Maynooth Committee made preliminary plans for a great conference in London. The protestant denominations of Britain appeared to be approaching a nearer unanimity of purpose than on any previous occasion. On the eve of the conference the Watchman stated that "either Popery must destroy evangelical religion or evangelical religion must destroy Popery."[41]

The Wesleyan leadership had already given its sanction to united action at the London Wesleyan aggregate meeting held on April 25. Bunting chaired the meeting and stated that the matter was so urgent that the Methodists should act separately and with other groups - in short by any means possible. The Methodist president argued that Maynooth had become one of the focal points in the great world battle between truth and superstition. Maynooth trained priests not only interrupted missionary efforts in Ireland but in the colonies also. Bunting permitted himself the jibe at O'Connell that all the Methodists must become "repalers [sic] : What we will endeavour to repeal, if unfortunately it should pass into a law... is the Bill for extending and perpetuating the grant to Maynooth."[42]

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39 Watchman, 16 Apr. 1845.
40 Ms. diary of Charles Prest.
41 Watchman, 30 Apr. 1845.
42 Ibid.

Thelwall described the Wesleyan meeting as the most enthusiastic and unanimous of all.[43] Five days later it was a different story when 1,039 delegates assembled for the Anti-Maynooth Conference. At the second sitting, the split which the Wesleyans had noticed in their private discussions in March became public. A small number of Baptists and Independents, who insisted on stating their voluntary principles, seceded from the main conference. The Anti- Maynooth agitation had fragmented into two different parts symbolised by the two conferences; the Anti-Maynooth conference comprising the Evangelical Anglicans, Congregationalists and Wesleyan Methodists; and the Crosby Hall conference comprising the Presbyterians, Independents and Methodist secession groups.

The differences in approach were manifested in the various denominational magazines. The Congregational Magazine edited by the anti-catholic John Blackburn was opposed to Popery as a religious system. The magazine carried an article on Maynooth in April and its readers were urged to leave no effort untried "to prove to the world that the Reformation of England was not achieved in vain."[44] The magazines of the Methodist New Connexion and the Wesleyan Methodist Association were opposed in principle to state endowments although their anti-catholic prejudice often showed.[45] It was bad that the government had decided to endow a particular denomination; it was worse to endow Roman Catholics.

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43 Thelwall, op.cit., lxxvii.

44 Congregational Magazine (1845), N.S. ix, pp.245-259.

45 New Methodist Magazine (1845), pp.259-262.
Wesleyan Association Magazine (1845), pp.158-161, 215-217, 307-309.

The articles in the Wesleyan Association Magazine were a neat reverse of the traditional Wesleyan argument:

> "If Popery is to be checked... - the principle of state-church endowments must be nationally renounced... many members and ministers of the Wesleyan Conference Connexion, are advocates of state-endowments." 46

This touched a sensitive Wesleyan nerve. Its leadership had supported the Established Churches of England and Ireland because they were a bulwark to Popery. Not only had the Anglican Church proved theologically unsound, but the very principle which the Wesleyans held was now working against them. If they supported state endowments why should they not support this one? Paradoxically, Methodist consistency was proving inconsistent. The Watchman with some sophisticated reasoning stated:

> "It is obvious, therefore, that we, who hold the Establishment principle, (however we may admit and deplore the defects of existing establishments), could not accede to such terms; [Anti-State Church wording on petitions] and; indeed, even if we held the Voluntary principle, we should still regard it as of such minor importance as to deserve, not a sole or a first, but an altogether subordinate place in the statement of our objections to the perpetual endowment of Popery." 47

The expression of simple "No Popery" prejudice could be a complex business in the changing political and theological scene in the England of the 1840s.

If the Anti-Maynooth Conference achieved nothing else it showed that Wesleyan Methodist opinion in the country was hostile to the Maynooth grant. The Connexion was no longer following a tortuous and twisting educational policy; this was a simple matter. Wesleyan delegates took it in turn to express the unanimity of opinion in their congregations;

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46 Wesleyan Association Magazine (1845), p.217.

47 Watchman, 2 Apr. 1845.

John James for Liverpool, George Osborn for Manchester, Robert Newstead for Leeds, Ralph Wilson for Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Edward Walker for Birmingham, Jacob Stanley for Bristol, etc.[48] Prest could boast that "one thousand petitions have been presented, up to this time, to the House of Lords by the Wesleyans. I am in a position to astonish that House, on any night that I may please to do so."[49] So keen were the Wesleyans to present a united front that Prest published a letter in the Watchman stating that the petition in favour of the Maynooth grant from the Wesleyans at Barnstaple had no official basis.[50]

It seems that this time the Wesleyans were genuinely unanimous and that the regions were not in need of a London stimulus. However, the Wesleyans had cried wolf once too often and government ministers were no longer sure if the impressive Methodist petitioning was genuine or simply another administrarive exercise inspired from London.[51] Dixon was presumptuous but probably accurate when he stated, "I am a Methodist preacher; and if you will permit me, I will try to represent the opinions of something like a million and a half of Her Majesty's subjects."[52]

In spite of further public meetings, including one at which the Earl of Winchilsea and Bunting shared the same platform,[53] the progress of

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48 Thelwall, op.cit., pp.18-204.

49 Ibid., p.127.

50 Watchman, 16 Apr. 1845.

51 G.I.T. Machin, "The Maynooth Grant, the Dissenters and Disestablishment," English Historical Review, lxxxii (1967), p.63.

52 Thelwall, op.cit.,xlii.

53 Ms. diary of Charles Prest, 14 May 1845.

the Bill seemed unstoppable. On May 19 the third reading of the Bill began in the Commons; 8,922 petitions had been to no avail. It was ironical that the Crosby Hall meeting was convened when the Bill was debated for the final time.[54] The Protestant agitation had divided at the crucial point. The final vote in the commons was a formality and there was another big majority (133). The most ominous feature of the vote was the split in the Conservative party; 148 in favour and 149 against. Peel was left with some problems and the Watchman was disconsolate:

> "The measure then has been triumphantly borne through the House of Commons by a coalition of the apostate Conservative Premier and his parliamentary creatures, with Lord John Russell and the bulk of what is called the Liberal party." [55]

At the end of May, 1845 the action moved from the Commons to the Lords and from England to Ireland. On the 26th Prest, in company with Culling Eardley Smith, Dr. Holloway and John Blackburn, set off for Ireland. When he arrived in Dublin he wrote Bunting that he would try "to do something to arouse the Wesleyans here which, of course, I shall endeavour to do, in concert with Mr Waugh, if I can move him and the Dublin Ministers."[56] Who would have thought in 1829, when Bunting and Tobias were trying to control the Irish preachers, that sixteen years later the secretary of the Committee of Privileges, with Bunting's sanction, would be in Dublin trying to persuade the Irish preachers to oppose government concession to Roman Catholicism? Catholic pressure and Wesleyan reaction had produced yet another irony.

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54 E.R. Norman, "The Maynooth Question of 1845", op.cit., p.433.

55 Watchman, 28 May 1845.

56 M.C.A. MSS. Charles Prest to Jabez Bunting, 27 May 1845.

The character of Irish Methodism had not changed much and no stimulation was necessary. Earlier in May, Waugh had been in London for the traditional meetings. At the Wesleyan Missionary Society anniversary in Exeter Hall he stated that he was "sore at the way in which Irish Protestantism has been treated by those who should have nourished and supported it."[57] Throughout May the Wesleyans had been prominent in the anti-Maynooth demonstrations in Ireland, especially in the North.[58] When the Irish version of the anti-Maynooth conference met in Dublin in early June, the Methodists were ready and willing to take an active part. There were seven Wesleyans[59] on the central committee, a number much higher than their numerical strength warranted. The conference was attended by many dignitaries of the Irish Established Church and was chaired by the Marquis of Devonshire,[60] but the days of the old "Protestant Ascendancy" were over and the meeting had limited effect.

The Irish Methodists were well pleased with Prest; Waugh described him as a "fine fellow."[61] However defeat was inevitable and the Wesleyans in Ireland took it badly. The annual address to the societies in Ireland stated that "a professedly Protestant government, you are aware has recently so far forgot the character and interests of the nation as formally to propose the permanent endowment of a College for the establishment and propagation of fatal error."[62]

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57 Watchman, 28 May 1845.

58 Belfast Newsletter, 20 May 1845. Wesleyan preachers were prominent at a large meeting in Lisburn.

59 They were: Henry Deery (Dublin), John Greer (Dublin), Robert Massaroon (Dublin), Thomas Waugh (Chairman of the Cork Circuit), John Hughes (Wicklow), Dawson Heather and E. Young (Stephen's Green).

60 M.C.A. MSS. Charles Prest to Jabez Bunting, 27 May 1845.

61 M.C.A. MSS. Thomas Waugh to Jabez Bunting, 9 June 1845.

62 The Annual Address of the Conference to the Societies in Ireland. Cork, 30 june 1845.

Back in England the fight was carried on to the end. On June 2nd the Maynooth Bill passed its first reading in the Lords and the second reading was carried two days later with a large majority (157). On June 9th the London Wesleyans met again, this time to adopt a memorial to the Queen. The meeting was marked more by its speeches than by its object which was recognised to be hopeless. Prest reported that his visit to Ireland had taught him an "appalling lesson, kept systematically from before the British public, that for years there had been a deliberate and persevering discouragement to Protestantism in Ireland."[63] Henry Fish, who had written the most vitriolic pamphlet[64] in response to the Maynooth Bill, this time threatened to withold his taxes before he was urged along wiser pathways by Bunting. The President, now a man in his late sixties, gave eloquent expression to his disappointment with Peel:

> "It is a strange thing to have lived long enough to hear a minister of the crown of Great Britain lay down as a maxim, an oracle, an axiom which was to regulate his own and the proceedings of both parties in the State, that, when any question is brought before Parliament bearing on religion, it is to be decided not at all on religious grounds, but exclusively on political grounds. A shocking sentiment - and I greatly regret that it should have proceeded from a man, of whom, in the main, I have always been inclined to think more respectfully, than some others have." [65]

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63 Watchman, 11 June 1845.

64 Henry Fish, The Workings of Popery: or, the Effects which Popery has a tendency to produce, and the means which are employed to produce them; in which the question is briefly viewed in relation to the Maynooth Grant (London 1845).

65 Watchman, 11 June 1845.

The Wesleyan meeting was in vain as Bunting knew it would be and the Bill received its third reading in the Lords on June 16; two weeks later the royal assent was given: "Not only a new but a revolutionary principle has been introduced into the British Constitution."[66] As Chadwick has aptly put it: "Extraordinary though it then appeared, and extraordinary though it still appears, Peel passed an act of Parliament to give money to the Roman Catholic church in Ireland. Scottish churchmen asked the government for money and were refused. English bishops asked the government for money and were refused. Catholic bishops from Ireland asked for money and extracted it from a Tory government."[67]

Peel's resolution and the support he received from other leading statesmen, enabled the government to carry the Maynooth Bill against enormous extra-parliamentary pressure, and thereby revealed something about the nature of English political life in the middle of the century. Political power rested with Parliament. However, the division lists in the Commons indicated that all was not well with Peel's party and the measure would never have been passed without Liberal support. The Wesleyans were left disillusioned with politics and politicians; committed to the extension of missionary efforts in Ireland[68] and in

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66 Watchman, 2 July 1845.

67 Chadwick, op.cit., p.223.

68 Watchman, 11 June 1845. Dixon proposed that £5,000 or £10,000 should be found for expanding Wesleyan missionary efforts in Ireland. The same sentiment was expressed by T.R. Birks, the Evangelical rector of Kelshall in Hertfordshire, in a letter published by the Protestant Association in 1845:

"If our rulers, with a fatal madness, tax us to propagate idolatry, let us cheerfully tax ourselves in the cause of truth. Even now there is a wide door open for us in the Societies which exist already: The Church Education Society; the Ladies' Hibernian Female Schools; the Irish Scripture Readers; the Achill and Dingle Missions; besides local objects without number, and the efforts of the Wesleyans and others in the same cause."

search of evangelical allies for the next round in the fight. The thought of laying down arms or seeking a truce never entered their minds. In this war of principle the terms for surrender were never acceptable.

Since the defeat of Lord Sidmouth's Bill in 1811 the political exertions of the Methodists had achieved little. In spite of an impressive display of organisational efficiency, Methodist educational policy was a failure. In an effort to exclude others the Methodists had effectively excluded children from education. Although the Wesleyans had attained a 'respectable' position in English society, the price was high. The policy of controlled expansion forced many of the most dynamic Methodists out of the Wesleyan Connexion, and the long list of secessions from 1797 tell their own story. Some of the factors which enabled the Wesleyans to become 'respectable' helped other denominations to do the same. The constitutional revolution from 1828 to 1832 assisted the theologically unorthodox gain political and social rights at the expense of the privileged position of the two Church Establishments. Methodism was politically unable to counteract the new aggression of Irish Catholics as the Maynooth Bill proved. The time seemed right to pursue an alliance of the orthodox against the heretical. The origins of this new direction can be seen in the decade before Maynooth.

The growth of the Oxford Movement in the late 1830s disturbed the traditional orientation of Wesleyan religion and politics. The Established Church could no longer be trusted, but the Methodists had no desire to enter the camp of the militant dissenters. An article in the Watchman in November 1838 neatly summarised the Wesleyan dilemma. Fundamentally

their principles had not altered in the slightest. They were opposed to Roman Catholicism because it was superstitious idolatry, and in this opposition Ireland played a crucial role. The establishment of the Irish Wesleyan mission, Butterworth and Allan's support for the Hibernian Society, the creation of Methodist schools, and the maintenance of the Irish Established church were all elements in the same crusade.

The Oxford Movement was a set-back and the Watchman was forced into a new direction:

> "We are not for minor distinctions, whether we are Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Baptists, Calvinistic or Arminian Methodists, we are endeared to each other, as Protestants, and it would be a shame to our profession if we could not unite against the common foe." 69

It was the obvious alternative. If some members of the Established Church could no longer be trusted, and some dissenters were too radical then why not cream off the evangelical and anti-catholic wings of both? 1838 was the year in which the Watchman gave serious attention to the Oxford Movement and 1838 was the year in which it began to advocate a union of protestants.[70]

For a while the Protestant Associations appeared to be the obvious channel but their aims were avowedly political and the Wesleyan Connexion as a whole could not live peacefully within their compass. The Methodists had always been a missionary conscious denomination and any union of protestants which took no account of world mission was inadequate. After Peel's election victory the urgency for union slackened but the pamphlet was with the Tractarians in 1842 and the educational clauses in 1843

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69 Watchman, 7 Nov. 1838.

70 Watchman, 10 Oct. 1838.

brought a renewal of interest. On June 1st, 1843 a meeting was convened in Exeter Hall for the promotion of Christian union. The Wesleyans, especially Bunting, were enthusiastic and turned out in large numbers,[71] but the time was not quite right. The political events of 1844 and 1845 changed that.

In 1844 the government introduced a Chapels Bill by which the Unitarians were given the right to hold their property. The Wesleyans called it the "Trinitarian Spoliation Bill" or the "Unitarian Fraud Legalization Bill",[72] and called for a "New Party in the Legislature whose great principle shall be that the Word of God is the safest guide for nations..."[73] In 1845 the Maynooth and Irish Colleges Bills[74] were the last straws. It seemed that the forces of Roman Catholicism and Socinianism were in the ascendant and only a determined and united evangelical opposition could stem the tide. Support for the old Church and State concept of the Protestant Constitution was at an end. The Church was theologically unsound and the Conservatives were politically unsafe.

It takes more than one to form an alliance and fortunately for the Wesleyans there were similar trends in operation among some of the other protestant denominations. Dissent was showing signs of fragmentation with the ardent Voluntaries on one side and the anti-catholics on the other. The former, on Miall's initiative, established the powerful Anti-State Church Association in April 1844 which declared that "all

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71 Watchman, 24 May 1843.

72 Watchman, 22 May 1844.

73 Watchman, 21 Aug. 1844.

74 Watchman, 21 May 1845.

legislation by secular governments in affairs of religion is an encroachment upon the rights of man, and an invasion of the prerogatives of God."[75] The Watchman declared firmly "that we cannot co-operate in the new Anti-State Church movement"[76] and fortunately there were others who felt the same. The crunch came over the anti-Maynooth agitation because the anti-catholic dissenters led by John Blackburn and Sir Culling Eardley Smith naturally wanted to support the anti-Maynooth Conference. The Members of the Anti-State Church Association supported the subsequent conference at Crosby Hall. The rift was complete when Smith and Blackburn attended the Irish anti-Maynooth Conference at the Rotunda in Dublin. On his visit to Ireland Blackburn realised what the Wesleyans had found out several decades before, that if Roman Catholicism was to be checked in Ireland then it was futile attacking the Established Church. His voluntary principles would not let him assent whole-heartedly to state endowment so he arrived at a compromise. In a speech he stated that "the Dissenters in England have been much deceived with regard to the state of the Established Church in Ireland."[77] He argued that the Church of Ireland was in much better condition than he had supposed and that it merited support in practice if not in principle.

Blackburn was contending for an evangelical base from which Popery could be attacked. His stimulus was the same as the Wesleyans, the

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75 G.I.T. Machin, op.cit., pp.61-85.

76 Watchman, 31 Jan. 1844 and 14 Feb. 1844.

77 John Backburn, The Three Conferences held by the opponents of the Maynooth College Endowment, in London and Dublin, during the months of May and June 1845. Containing a Vindication of the author from the aspersions of the Dissenting press. (London, 1845).

situation in Ireland and dissatisfaction with political solutions. He stated,

> "If Lord John Russell has betrayed his dissenting friends, Sir Robert Peel has betrayed conscientious churchmen. Thus we see that vain is the help of man; and God has taught us not to put our trust in man, no, not in princes. This is a brighter day for Protestantism, than when the Battle of the Boyne was won, for we are brought to remember that it is not by might or power that we are to prevail, but by the Spirit of the Lord." [78]

Blackburn had picked up his Irish phraseology very quickly, but he incurred the wrath of the powerful dissenting press. He was attacked in the Patriot,[79] the Morning Advertiser[80] and the Eclectic Review but the most bitter of all came from Miall's Nonconformist:

> " 'Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour.' Voluntaryism, unhappily, is tainted with dead flies..." [81]

In spite of the efforts of the nonconformist press Smith and Blackburn managed to carry the Congregationalists with them. They took a leading part in the anti-Maynooth Conference and formed the largest single denomination at the Evangelical Alliance convention. There were 170 of them at the Freemason's Hall in August, 1846, 18.4% of the total conference and 21.7% of the British delegates.[82] The Wesleyans welcomed them with open arms; Smith spoke at the aggregate meeting of London Methodists in April,[83] and Prest inserted a letter in the Watchman defending Blackburn from dissenting attacks.[84]

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78 Ibid., p.28.

79 Ibid., pp.40-41.

80 Ibid., p.50.

81 Ibid., p.51.

82 See Appendix 1. Calculations are based on the lists of members appended to each official conference report.

83 Watchman, 30 Apr. 1845.

84 Watchman, 18 June 1845.

The Evangelical Anglicans had traditionally held themselves aloof from the dissenting denominations, including the Wesleyan Methodists. "The Fathers of the Victorians" had been suspicious of political dissent and Wesley's drift from the Church had not been forgiven. By the 1840s the situation had changed. The repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts and Catholic Emancipation had undermined the confessional nature of the state. The Wesleyans had emerged from early 'excesses' and 'enthusiasm' to become a highly organised and 'respectable' denomination. Some of the Evangelicals like McNeile and Stowell could still be disparaging on occasions but the general climate was more sympathetic. The Evangelicals and the Wesleyans had come into contact through the various missionary, Bible and Irish societies. The May meetings and the platforms of the Protestant Association had acted as bridge builders. The old paternalism, symbolised in Wilberforce's relationship with Butterworth, had largely disappeared.

The growth of Millenarian doctrine through the Albury Park conferences was an additional stimulus for alliance, because if Christ's return was imminent then missionary labour would have to be intensified. Bickersteth's biographer stated that the Evangelical's 'conversion' to pre-millenialism gave him "new motives for diligence in the shortness of the time, and the prospect of a speedy recompence from the Lord in the day of His appearing."[85] With such urgency and with the mission field calling there was no room for secondary denominational distinctions. Pre-millenialism gave a particular impetus to mission work among the Jews and Roman Catholicism was firmly called the "Man of Sin."

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85 Birks, op.cit., p.44. See also Iain Murray, The Puritan Hope ch. ix for some light on a scantily researched subject.

The Anglican Evangelicals had more reason than anyone else to protest against the Maynooth Bill. They were committed in principle to supporting the Established Church in Ireland and were appalled at the prospect of concurrent endowment or, even worse, the disestablishment of the Irish church in preparation for state establishment of Roman Catholicism. Clergy like Stowell, McNeile and Thelwall had appeared on Protestant Association platforms even before the government plans were made public. Once again Bickersteth was assessing events in the light of his eschatological system:

> "The present Government seems set on bringing in measures falsely called liberal, really infidel, for giving political power to the Jews, and support to the teachers of Popery. The dispensation of Grace to the Gentiles seems fast closing, and the Jewish restoration at hand. At least the signs of the times are such as may well increase our watchfulness." 86

The Anglicans took a leading part in the anti-Maynooth Conference but it was in vain. As with the Wesleyans and the Congregationalists, the failure was a particularly bitter one and the ground was well prepared when the Scottish Free Churchmen proposed an association "to concentrate the strength of an enlightened Protestantism against the encroachments of Popery and Puseyism..."[87]

The Congregationalists had already shown their support for an alliance, Bickersteth was writing articles on christian union in the Record,[88] and the Wesleyan position was clear. These three denominations accounted for 470 of the delegates at the Evangelical Alliance

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86 Birks, op.cit., p.294.

87 Thelwall, p.clxxxvi. The letter was dated 5 Aug. 1845 and was signed by Dr. Chalmers.

88 Birks, op.cit., p.302.

Conference in 1846; 60% of the British representatives.

A preliminary conference for promoting Christian union was held in Liverpool in October, 1845.[89] 216 ministers from twenty denominations took part and a series of resolutions were passed. The aim of the proposed alliance was to "exhibit, as far as practicable, the Essential Unity of the Church of Christ";[90] It is difficult to ascertain at that stage whether the major stimulus for the alliance was a real desire for Christian union or the need to resist an aggressive Catholicism. These two elements can be clearly deduced from the Liverpool conference which resolved "to open and maintain by correspondence and otherwise, fraternal intercourse between all parts of the Christian world: and, by the press, and by such Scriptural means, as, in the progress of this Alliance, may be deemed expedient, to resist, not only the efforts of Popery, but every form of Anti-Christian Superstition and Infidelity."[91]

Perhaps it is unwise to disentangle two attitudes which lodged together very neatly, and the Evangelical Alliance had an international dimension aside from peculiar political circumstances in Britain. The leaders of the movement certainly wanted it to be very different from the Anti-Maynooth Conference. The object was to be primarily religious: "We disclaim all merely political or party objects."[92]

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89 Brief Statement of the Proceedings of the Conference in Liverpool for promoting Christian Union and of the object of the proposed Evangelical Alliance (Liverpool, 1845).

90 Ibid., Resolution 3, p.4.

91 Ibid., see also T.R. Birks, op.cit., pp.302-303 where he sets these factors down side by side.

92 Brief Statement of the proceedings of the Conference in Liverpool, p.6.

The Methodists were understandably enthusiastic about the concept of Christian union. They had straddled Church and Dissent for almost half a century, during which they had witnessed important concessions to Roman Catholicism. The Irish Wesleyans were particularly keen to support evangelical alliance after two decades of political disappointments. They had always sought bigger and more powerful allies in the missionary crusade against Catholicism and the new union promised to be the biggest of all. Fossey Tackaberry was overwhelmed by the meetings in Liverpool on January 13, 1846:

> "I never saw - indeed, I never expect to see - anything like them outside the gates of paradise." 93

When the alliance began to make progress in Ireland in 1846, the Wesleyans were closely involved. The first public meeting of the Alliance in Ireland was held in the Primitive Wesleyan Chapel in Dublin. Subsequent meetings in the Rotunda and in Fisherwick Place, Belfast attracted a large number of Methodist ministers.[94] The report of the London Evangelical Conference in 1846 shows that fourteen Irish Wesleyans made the journey to England.[95] It was but a brief honeymoon between the very different horrors of the Maynooth Act and the Irish famine.

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93 C.H. Crookshank, History of Methodism in Ireland iii, p.366.

94 Ibid.

95 They were: J.O. Bonsall (Dublin), J. Greer (Dublin), H. Haycroft (Cork), D. McAfee (Belfast), R. Massaroon (Dublin), W. Morgan (Cork), W.D. Stephens (Omagh), F. Tackaberry (Sligo), T. Waugh (Bandon), H. Webster (Dublin), H. Deery (Dublin).

In England Bunting was the main driving force behind Wesleyan involvement in the Alliance. He was a member of the sub-committee formed in Liverpool[96] and later became an Honorary Secretary of the London provisional committee.[97] When the direction of the Oxford Movement became obvious after 1838 Bunting manifested a real interest in the progress of Evangelical Alliance. This interest developed steadily until 1846 when he was a regular speaker at Alliance meetings.[98]

After the Liverpool Conference in October, Bunting received an interesting letter from Alfred Barrett, a London preacher who later became Governor of Richmond College. Barrett was one of the principal theorists on the Methodist ministry, and, as a junior committee member of the Evangelical Alliance, he was keen to tell Bunting how he hoped the movement would grow. He desired a more fundamental unity than an annual convention and was particularly wary of political involvement:

> "If it were to be formally and specially an Anti-Popish confederation, I fear it would be difficult to keep it free from the distraction and excitement of merely secular politics... I would not give up the Anti-, the aggressive, character of the movement but I would have it move against more evils than one." [99]

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96 Ward, Early Victorian Methodism, p.332.

97 Lists of the committees formed in London, Liverpool, Glasgow, and Dublin are given in a pamphlet entitled Brief Summary of Facts in relation to the Proposed Evangelical Alliance (London, 14 Apr. 1846).

98 See, Report of the Speeches delivered at the Public Meeting, held in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, On Friday evening January 16, 1846, for the purpose of explaining the principles and objects of the proposed evangelical alliance (Manchester, 1846).
Also, Evangelical Alliance. Report of the Proceedings of the Conference held at the Freemason's Hall, London, from August 19 to September 2, 1846. (London, 1847).
(Especially pp.248-249 and 507-509).

99 Ward, op.cit., pp.332-338.

Barrett wanted to see "Evangelical men" in parliament who would oppose "not only the legislative sanction of Popery, but of infidelity, Sabbath-breaking, wickedness, and every form of oppression whether it be civil or ecclesiastical." This was to want to return to the heyday of parliamentary evangelicalism in the early nineteenth century before Catholic pressure dominated the nation's "religious politics". However the Maynooth Bill had been a bitter defeat for Bunting and when the Evangelical Alliance Conference in London discussed Roman Catholicism on the seventh morning he was in no mood to give in to more conciliatory opinion:

> "It was a great retrocession, to depart from avowed opposition to Popery, and the determination to enter a Scriptural Protest against it, - merely to come down to the statement, that we were ready to enquire into the facts. Many of us would not need to enquire: there are facts enough before us." [100]

A number of the speakers in the debate on Catholicism were Irish, including the Earl of Roden. The Irish participants in the Evangelical Alliance were having the same effect as the Irish Methodists on the English Wesleyan Conference.

There were two major elements in the Evangelical Alliance Conference; the desire for greater Christian harmony and the need for a stronger evangelicalism to engage the forces of error. An analysis of the attendance statistics of the Anti-Maynooth and Evangelical Alliance conferences sheds some light on the motives for Wesleyan participation. There were only 86 people who attended both gatherings;[101] 47 (over 50%), were Wesleyans. 31% of the Methodist Delegates at the Evangelical Alliance had also attended the anti-Maynooth Conference. This is a

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100 Evangelical Alliance, Report of Conference, p.248.

101 Appendix, Table 2.

much higher percentage than any other denomination, which is what one would expect from Methodist religious and political attitudes in the 1830s and 1840s.

Evangelical Alliance was the natural destination for the Wesleyan ministry after two difficult decades. Radical Dissent and a Church influenced by the Oxford Movement were equally unsatisfactory alternatives. The new aggression of the Irish Catholic church put constant pressure on the Wesleyans who always hoped for great things from the Irish mission. As Thomas Waugh put it, "Methodism is Protestantism's core in this land, let folks talk as they will." [102]

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102 Ward, op.cit., p.298.

APPENDIX

Tables on the relationship between the Anti-Maynooth campaign and Evangelical Alliance.

1. The Denominational composition of the Evangelical Alliance Conference held in London from August 19 to September 2, 1846.

Denomination	Numbers	%
Baptists	74	8.0
Congregationalists	170	18.4
Established Church	152	16.5
Wesleyan Methodists	148	16.1
Other Methodists	37	4.0
Overseas Delegates	140	15.2
Others	201	21.8
TOTAL	922	100

2. The Denominational distribution of those who attended both the Anti-Maynooth Conference and the Evangelical Alliance.

Denomination	Numbers	% of total	% of E.A. Reps.
Baptists	4	4.6	5.4
Congregationalists	17	19.8	10.0
Established Church	11	12.8	7.2
Wesleyan Methodists	47	54.7	31.8
Other Methodists	3	3.5	8.1
Others	4	4.6	2.0
TOTAL	86	100	64.5

3. Taking into account the overseas delegates, who could not have attended the Anti-Maynooth Conference, 11% of the delegates at that Conference attended the Evangelical Alliance in 1846. Over half of the 11% were Wesleyan Methodists.

4. The Central Executive of the Anti-Maynooth Committee consisted of 21 members. They were:-

Sir C.E. Smith, J. Blackburn, J. Burns, Dr. Bennett, W.M. Bunting, T.T. Cuffe, J. Cumming, W. Chalmers, T. Farmer, T. Hamilton, J.T. Holloway, S.R. Hall, W.W. Hull, B.W. Noel, J.D. Paul, C. Prest, H. Robbins, A. Reed, R.B. Seeley, A.S. Thelwall.

(6 Established Churchmen, 5 Wesleyans, 3 Congregationalists, 3 other denominations and 4 not known).

17, or 81%, of this Committee attended the Evangelical Alliance.

5. The London Provisional Committee of the Evangelical Alliance consisted of 8 members. They were:-

Sir C.E. Smith, R.C.L. Bevan, E. Bickersteth, Dr. J. Bunting, J. Hamilton, Dr. Leifchild, A.D. Campbell, Dr. Steane.

4, or 50%, of this Committee attended the Anti-Maynooth Conference.

CONCLUSION

> "Two conceptions of religion were living in England side by side, and the French Revolution compelled a choice between them. One was of religion as the formulary of an established society, its statement of faith in itself; the other as a catastrophic conversion of the individual, a miraculous shaking off of secret burdens. One was fixed on this world, the other on the next".[1]

> "The decline of Bunting, the preacher, which coincided with the supremacy of Bunting, the ecclesiastical statesman, had long been preceded by the disappearance of Jabez, the private personality".[2]

The historical technique of studying the formative years of a man's life as a foundation for understanding his future actions is particularly appropriate in Bunting's case. As a teenage Methodist he lived through the French Revolution, Wesley's death, the Plan of Pacification, the Kilhamite Secession, the Rebellion of the United Irishmen and the war with France. It was a decade of uncertainty and fear in the nation at large and for different reasons within Methodism itself. In a Connexion which emphasised experience and seniority, Bunting had to earn his spurs, like all young Methodists, in the pulpit. Apparently he was well equipped to do just that because when he was assigned to London for the first time in 1803 "he was known in the Provinces as a young Preacher of great promise".[3] Dr. Leifchild wrote that he had never heard such preaching and that although some excelled him in some points "none that I had ever heard equalled him as a whole".[4]

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1 V. Kiernan, "Evangelicalism and the French Revolution", Past and Present, no. 2 (Feb. 1952), pp. 44-54.

2 W.R. Ward, The Early Correspondence of Jabez Bunting. T.R.H.S. Camden fourth series, xi (1972), p. 16.

3 T.P. Bunting, The Life of Jabez Bunting, i, p. 165.

4 Ibid., p. 166.

It is unlikely that Bunting would have achieved his future eminence in Methodism without his obvious preaching talents but alongside his preaching there was developing in him the seeds of the ecclesiastical administrator. Bunting's early experiences at Macclesfield were obviously formative. The revivalists in the area entertained notions of separation from Wesleyanism and Bunting wrote to Richard Reece that "Revivalism, as of late professed and practised, was (likely if) not checked, to have gradually ruined genuine Methodism".[5] It seems that from an early age Bunting equated revivalistic enthusiasm with indiscipline and secession. His own conversion had been thoughtful and private, his education had been in the hands of Unitarians and these facts can be set against the backcloth of revolution in France and rebellion in Ireland. In these circumstances it is not surprising that he should equate the preaching of the Word with order and restraint not chaos and unbridled enthusiasm.

Although Bunting preached two hundred and sixty-nine sermons in his second year in London, he found time to devote to those interests which were to dominate his later life - Methodist administration, public affairs and contact with the wider evangelical world. Aside from helping to sort out the accounts of the Book Room and the missionary society, he participated in the Society for the Suppression of the Slave Trade, the Eclectic Society and the London Missionary Society. By his mid 20s the son of a radical Manchester tailor had a foothold in evangelical high society, and had met Newton, Pratt, Simeon, Venn and Henry Martyn. In his spare time Bunting attended debates in the House of Commons, a strange occupation for a Methodist preacher. The picture

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5 Jabez Bunting to Richard Reece, 15 July 1803. In Ward, op. cit., p.12.

which emerges is one of a young man from a poor provincial family whose talents, education and early opportunities encouraged him to be at the centre of affairs. When Bunting left London in 1805 he had only been engaged in the Ministry for six years and yet he was "regarded by those who watched events as the future leader of his own Church, and as its ablest representative to other Churches and to the general public".[6] If his theology was different, and he made no bones about his Arminianism in the Eclectic Society, his social and political instincts were substantially the same as the Anglican Evangelicals. There is no better summary of his attitude than the resolution which he drew up expressing the opinions of the Manchester Wesleyans on Lord Sidmouth's Bill.

> "That the facilities, which have been thus afforded for religious worship and instruction, have powerfully contributed to the improvement of public morals, and to the promotion of industry, subordination, and loyalty, among the middle and inferior orders of the community; and that to this high degree of Religious Liberty, under the blessing of Divine Providence, the preservation of this happy country from the horrors of that revolutionary frenzy, which has so awfully desolated the nations of the Continent, is principally to be ascribed".[7]

Explicit in this declaration is the notion that religion is the supreme antidote to revolution and confusion. In a sense one can see Wesleyan Methodism as an ecclesiastico-political institution for controlling revolution, coming of age in a revolutionary era. In such an organisation the two pronged threat is ecclesiastical indiscipline and social radicalism. In the early part of the nineteenth century the jabs of this fork could best be recognised in crude ranterism and in working-class political associations. In the second quarter of the century the pricks were more painful from the radical demands of the

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6 T.P. Bunting, op. cit., p. 263.

7 Ibid., p. 371.

Irish Catholics and the anti-establishment pressure from political Dissent. Unfortunately the medication prescribed by Dr. Bunting in the early period simply did not work in the later period and new treatment had to be applied. The initial theory was a "No Politics" doctrine which was the perfect cloak for conservatism. However the theory rebounded when no-one, including Bunting, was quite sure whether Catholic pressure was religious or political. Each case had to be judged on its merits and Bunting steered the Connexion away from conflict over Catholic Emancipation and Irish Municipal reform but into conflict over education amd Maynooth endowment. The Methodist leader closely distinguished between religious and political issues but there were those inside the Connexion who could not follow his logic and stress was inevitable. Before the 1840s Bunting demonstrated a sure touch in political matters but the old Church and Tory philosophy crumbled when the former became theologically untrustworthy and the latter realised that Ireland could no longer be governed on the model of the "Protestant Ascendancy". The ruin of Bunting's cherished principles was made complete in 1849 when the connexional liberals dealt their most telling blow and Wesleyan Methodism was rent in two.

The forties was a sad decade for Wesleyanism for one other reason. Until that point the Methodist membership as a percentage of the total population had increased steadily but thereafter it declined and the great hope of evangelising the nation had gone for ever. Bunting was concerned about Methodist numbers but his policy had always been expansion only on certain terms - ecclesiastical and political trouble-makers were not welcome. It has been too readily accepted that Bunting's use of discipline and his desire for conformity produced

disharmony. Who can say if greater tolerance would have resulted in closer co-operation and a more united evangelistic effort? The Christian church has demonstrated all too often that division is the unfortunate concomitant of expansion.

Bunting the hyper efficient administrator and rule interpretor was partly a creature of the Connexion's own making. Important jobs were showered upon him. In 1803 he was asked to sort out the Book Room finances, in 1806 he was made assistant secretary to the Conference, in 1814 he became secretary for six years, and in 1821 he was appointed Connexional Editor. Between 1813 and 1817 he devoted considerable time to the Methodist Missionary society. By his early forties there was practically no major post within the Connexion that he had not filled, including the Presidency of Conference in England and in Ireland. This was remarkable in a Connexion which venerated its old men but both Methodism and Bunting were the losers. The "Methodist Pope's" dominance in the 1830s and 1840s bore the marks of an administrator rather than a fervent itinerant preacher. As the Methodist societies settled into a denomination there was a need for a man who understood the Wesleyan tradition and who knew how to represent Methodism to the nation at large. Methodism shaped Bunting even more than he shaped it.

The problem of control also manifested itself in the sphere of education. How should a man be taught about the things of God and who should teach him? How much should a working man be taught about merely secular matters? What were the relative responsibilities of the state and the religious denominations in the education of the nation? These were the questions which had to be faced as the appalling facts of illiteracy in the industrial towns became more pressing. As the

traditional forces of Church and Dissent prepared themselves for the inevitable battle the Wesleyan Methodists were a third and confusing element. They could not let the Established Church dominate national education because after 1838 it was theologically unacceptable. On the other hand the Wesleyans could not give unequivocal support to government support of dissenting efforts because parts of Dissent were likewise theologically unacceptable. The Methodists could not acquiesce in state money going to the support of Anglo-Catholicism, Unitarianism and Roman Catholicism. The Wesleyans wanted government money but they wanted to retain control of their own educational establishments, and to exclude other religious groups from exercising the same rights. It was an impossibly narrow position and yet working from their religious hypothesis it was a supremely logical one. Why should the taxpayer have to pay for the support of heresy? More important, how could the British Isles and then the world be turned over to evangelical protestantism if the state was helping to bolster up its enemies? What was logical to the Wesleyans was tortuous and bigoted to their enemies. The Methodist educational policy between 1839 and 1847 was the subject of attack from every conceivable religious group at one stage or another. However the numerical strength and the superb political organisation of the Wesleyans ensured that their support was much sought after. In 1839 the Church politicians portrayed the Wesleyans as principled non-combatants in the conflict between Church and Dissent, and therefore their opposition to the Whig proposals was doubly significant. In 1843 it was the Dissenters who held out the olive branch. Methodist opposition to the Church was only made manifest because the Establishment had lost the right to govern due to theological heresy. Even so the allegiance of Methodism with Dissent in 1843 was not a

formal one, it was simply the acknowledgement that two groups traditionally opposed to each other found themselves on the same side because of circumstances outside their control. Although in a sense they made war together the Methodists were wary of political Dissent and the Wesleyans concluded a separate educational peace with the government.

How was Methodist educational policy formulated? On one level it can be seen as the natural progression of the principles of Wesley through Butterworth to Bunting. Education was only valuable if it produced Godly character. Any other type of instruction was not just second best but positively harmful. On another level the Methodists were prepared for the controversies of 1839 onwards by what was happening on the mission field in the 1830s. This was an important by-product of the remarkable missionary efforts of Methodism in the nineteenth century. In 1831 the Government, dissatisfied with the work of the voluntary societies in Ireland and under pressure from the Catholic Church, introduced a national system of education based on the principle of combined literary and separate religious instruction. If the whole dynamic of mission is to combat the native religion by persuading men of the 'truth' then it was anathema to the Methodists that the government should banish proselytism from education and introduce a new principle of religious equality. What really galled the Wesleyans was the failure of the government to distinguish between true and false religion especially when they had just started their own schools. Bunting was more concerned about Irish National Education than he had been two years earlier over Catholic Emancipation. What the Methodist leader failed to realise, like many others at the time, was that Catholic Emancipation was the government's admission that the Roman Catholics of

Ireland had rights. It is but a short step from political equality to religious and social equality. Bunting's stand in 1832, which he convinced a bewildered Conference to accept, was a dress rehearsal for the dispute in 1839.

A further reminder was provided by the Methodist missionary commitment to the British West Indies. In 1834 the government drew up "Heads of a plan for promoting the Education of Youth" in the colony. Bunting wrote to Lefevre, the undersecretary at the Colonial Office, expressing gratitude that "Instruction in the doctrines and precepts of Christianity must form the basis and must be made the inseparable attendant of any such system of education".[8] Bunting hoped that the government would avoid the latitudinarianism of the Irish scheme and stated that no alterations should be made "in the plan for educating the negro youth which would so far generalize the instruction to be given as in fact to neutralize it also as to its moral influence and public benefit". As in England later what the Methodists were out for in the West Indies was government aid for their own schools with the least possible interference. Their hopes were not realised because government grants were sporadic and insufficient. The Wesleyans had such narrow educational principles that they realised that no national system was likely to meet all their requirements. Their alternative was to plod on with their own schools and hope that the state would eventually provide the cash on terms that they could accept. Such a single-minded approach was likely to make few friends and many enemies.

The two most characteristic features of evangelicalism are the

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8 Jabez Bunting to Lohn Lefevre, 16 Apr. 1834. in W.R. Ward, Early Victorian Methodism, p. 52.

preservation of the truth and the preaching of that true Gospel to every creature. According to the Methodist definition, truth was most nearly extinguished in Ireland, the scene of Methodism's most intensive missionary efforts. Wesley had set the example with his twenty-one visits and obvious concern for the country. The Rebellion of 1798 only served to deepen the Wesleyan interest in Ireland's salvation. In the early nineteenth century the Methodists and the Anglican Evangelicals had a special interest in freeing the Irish people from the yoke of Popery. The evangelical war machine was put into top gear; gaelic speaking missionaries were sent out, tracts and Bibles were distributed, and educational societies proliferated. As in England, evangelical charity was dispensed on the premise that the social fabric should not be upset. The English working-class and the Irish Catholics had no rights except the right to charity and instruction from a church aware of its God-given responsibility. The lot of the poor could not be helped by political change but only by moral revolution. The object of true religion was to encourage habits of industry, thrift, sobriety and submission. To the nineteenth century evangelical mind, charity could not be demanded, it could only be humbly and gratefully received. Perhaps the social outworkings of evangelicalism can only be effective in a community where there is no conflict between the rich and the poor.

Even before 1823, when the Catholic Association began pressing for Emancipation, the Irish preachers and missionaries were in no mood to concede anything to the Irish Catholics. The lay leaders of the Wesleyan Committee of Privileges, already committed to the broader evangelical enterprise in Ireland, were prepared to accept the correspondence of the Irish Wesleyans and act upon it. As Catholic pressure grew so too did the Methodist reaction. The immediate rush to extremes

is characteristic of politico-religious conflict in Ireland and there was no room left for compromise; a principle is a principle. Full scale Wesleyan opposition to Catholic Emancipation was only averted by Bunting's timely application of the "No Politics" rule. Although Bunting had the astuteness to prevent the Methodists from opposing a measure that was certain to pass, some of the more wily Irish preachers realised that the floodgates had been opened. Bunting's protest against Irish National Education and the Maynooth Bill were belated attempts to stop the water pouring out. Increasingly he called upon the Methodists to defend the indefensible, (the Established Church in Ireland), and to oppose the unopposable, (the desire of Roman Catholics for treatment commensurate with their numbers).

From Wesley's lifetime down to 1845 the Methodists had at least some connection with almost every extreme Protestant organisation. Wesley supported the aims but certainly not the methods of Lord George Gordon's Protestant Association. Allan and Butterworth, who dominated the political behaviour of the Wesleyans in the first quarter of the century as Bunting dominated in the second, were rigid Protestant Constitutionists. They were instrumental in the formation of the Protestant Union in 1812. In the 1820s a number of Methodist preachers in England and in Ireland supported the Brunswick Constitutional Clubs. In the 1830s some were involved in the Orange Order and a high proportion of the Manchester and Liverpool preachers openly supported the new Protestant Association. In 1845 the whole Connexion was galvanised into opposing the Maynooth Bill on Protestant principles. Aside from these more extreme manifestations, the thread of anti-catholicism runs through Wesleyan politics in the first half of the nineteenth century. The Methodists saw themselves as rooted firmly in the Protestant

tradition in the great crusade against the Scarlet Woman. The Authorised Version of the Scriptures was the battle emblem and the position to be defended was the Protestant Constitution as settled in 1688. Fixed in their minds was the history of previous skirmishes - Hus' execution, the burnings at Smithfield under Mary, the persecutions of continental catholicism and the Rebellion of the United Irishmen. In the nineteenth century the most provocative symbols of hate were Daniel O'Connell and the Roman Catholic training seminary at Maynooth.

Until the growth of the Oxford Movement the main stimulus for Methodist anti-catholicism came from Ireland but after 1838 the Wesleyans were faced with a war on two fronts. As the drift toward Rome became more pronounced among some of the anglo-catholic clergy, the Methodists organised a pamphlet campaign. It was unfortunate for Graham that this conflict reached its peak the year before he introduced his factory education proposals. Methodist disillusionment with the Established Church was quickly followed by a loss of confidence in the Tory party. Peel, who had been the Wesleyan hero in his uncompromising fight against the Whig-O'Connell alliance, soon became the villain when he formulated his Irish policy. It was easier to hold protestant principles in opposition than it was to apply them when in power. The passage of the Maynooth Bill was a particularly bitter pill for the Methodists not only because of the measure itself but because it was the first time that a Wesleyan connexional agitation had failed. In defeat the Methodists had to learn that extra-parliamentary pressure was a poor substitute for parliamentary influence.

Peel's 'apostasy', coming so soon after the conflict with the

Oxford clergy, left the Wesleyan leadership in political isolation. The Evangelical Alliance came at just the right time; a union of 'serious' men with an orthodox Gospel and a strong missionary commitment was sweet consolation after the political defeat in 1845. Moreover, after the political affairs of the previous seven years, the Evangelical Alliance was a welcome return to religious priorities. Bunting, since his early days in London, had been an enthusiastic advocate of closer evangelical co-operation and he threw himself into the new alliance with customary vigour. The Wesleyan Tories had been forced to learn the futility of relying on political measures in the struggle against false religion. The constitutional revolution of 1828 and 1829, coupled with an increase of liberalism in religious matters, ensured that no government could set itself up as the guardian of theological orthodoxy.

From a historical perspective, Methodist anti-catholicism appears to be in stark contrast to the noble campaign for the abolition of slavery. The contradiction is only apparent because in Methodist eyes negro slavery and Roman Catholicism were symptoms of the same personal disease - bondage. Although one was physical and the other religious the result was the same; a man could not know true liberty, (i.e. freedom from sin and its consequences), because of the system that dominated him. Two letters written to Bunting demonstrate this attitude. John Beecham, one of the Methodist missionary secretaries, reported to Bunting in December 1832 the latest developments in the anti-slavery crusade:

> "We had, last night, a communication from Mr. Buxton giving us to understand that a committee were in negotiation with government - that they were digesting a plan of emancipation - that they agreed in adopting the great principle that Christianity alone could prepare the negroes for the new condition into which they are to be brought - that the

> greatest encouragement must therefore be given to missionary operations".[10]

Emancipation from physical bondage was but the prelude to a much greater freedom.

In 1840, Robert Alder, another Methodist missionary secretary, wrote to Bunting about events on the continent:

> "The leaders of the Spanish people do not appear to know what is meant by a state of freedom; and indeed how should they, seeing that they have been trained in the school of Popery or of Infidelity".[11]

It was because Roman Catholicism had an inadequate concept of true liberty that political privileges could not be given to its adherents. Both Roman Catholicism and negro slavery were horrible external manifestations of the inner rebellion against God whose truth alone could set men free.

From one angle one can see Methodist politics in terms of its anti-catholicism while from another it is possible to view Wesleyan political attitudes as a quest for self-identity in the traditional English division of Church and Dissent. Wesleyan Methodism grew up in the household of the Church of England and when it came of age that is where its loyalties lay. Although the parental home was not terribly proud of its wayward son and although the son was disturbed by some of the parental attitudes, there was no desire for a complete separation. The Wesleyans rightly realised that the Church Establishments in England and Ireland were a solid bulwark against unorthodoxy. Throughout their history, the Methodists had a particular relationship with the

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10 John Beecham to Jabez Bunting, 1 Dec. 1832. Ibid., p. 22.

11 Robert Alder to Jabez Bunting, 26 Oct. 1840. Ibid., pp. 250-251.

Evangelicals in the Church except when their Calvinism or Churchmanship was too rigidly expressed. In siding with the Establishment against political Dissent, the Wesleyan leadership was declaring its faith in John Wesley's example, in the Protestant Constitution, in an authoritarian ecclesiology and in a liberal paternalism. This attitude is well summarised by Bunting in a letter to James Kendall, the Superintendent of the Arbroath circuit.

> "I believe that a great majority of the most thoughtful and influential persons in our connexion, both ministers and laymen, are friendly to the principle of an Establishment, when connected with that of perfect religious liberty and protection to all other denominations.... I think we are bound by every principle of consistency, expediency, and duty to maintain the most friendly feelings towards the Church, and to discountenance as far as we can without making ourselves partizans, that bitter and unchristian hostility towards our two venerable National Establishments..."[12]

When Dissent marshalled its forces for the attack on the Church in the 1830s the Wesleyans were not in the ranks. However, just as Wesleyanism can be seen to have achieved its religious identity outside the context of the Established Church, the same can be said of its political development. Although the Oxford Movement sealed Methodist opposition to Graham's proposals, it is likely that it would have protested about the privileges given to the Church in any case.

Methodism's mid-way position between Church and Dissent meant that it had to take more than its fair share of criticism from both camps. By the second quarter of the nineteenth century the Wesleyans aspired to respectability but they still inspired very little confidence in the other religious groups. Methodism's growing numerical strength and institutionalism gave it a place in the traditional division between Church and Dissent but what exactly that meant was the subject of much

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12 Jabez Bunting to James Kendall, 24 Apr. 1834. Ibid., pp.69-70.

debate both inside and outside the Connexion. There is much to be said for the traditional interpretation of Anglican historians that what was happening in the Church of England was helping to form Wesleyan Methodism.

However the Methodists arrived at their political views, it is clear that they possessed a remarkably efficient system through which those opinions could be effectively made known. This is primarily because the Wesleyan Tory leadership knew how to get things done and were prepared to use the connexion's religious structure for political purposes. All the characteristics of the Victorian extra-parliamentary pressure group were visible in Methodism. There was the central metropolitan committee established to monitor political events; there was an effective communication system with the regions through the Circuit Superintendents; there was a weekly press organ used to make and distribute political comment; there was a skilful use of mass petitioning and lobbying of Members of Parliament. Above all there was a rigid discipline which demanded united action on a specific matter. There was none of the vagueness of regional Chartism manifested in the political behaviour of the Methodists. So efficient was the system that when the Committee of Privileges made a public statement politicians believed that it was speaking on behalf of all the Wesleyans up and down the country. However, the Methodist discipline was so inscrutable that no-one was quite sure if the Wesleyan Tories were misrepresenting the views of the Connexion.

Those inside Methodism realised that the Watchman was not representing the political opinions of all Wesleyans, but the repeated failure of other newspapers conveyed a false impression to non-Methodists. In 1841, for example, Joseph Wood wrote to Bunting stating his intention

of promoting a Methodist "weekly journal" called The Wesleyan. He said that "the connexion that exists between the Wesleyan Societies is purely of a religious character. Wesleyanism is inflexible and ardent in its loyalty, but lays no obligation upon its members to adopt any particular plans of political economy, or to attach themselves to any particular party in the state".[13] Consequently The Wesleyan was to be "strictly a reporter" on all disputed political questions. It was not Wood's intention to set up in opposition to the Watchman, but his letter clearly reveals that he thought the mouthpiece of the Wesleyan Tories was too overtly political. The Wesleyan might well have struck a deeper chord within Methodism than the Watchman but the speculation is purely academic because it never got off the ground. The ministerial Tories, with the financial backing of the wealthy laymen, dominated Methodism's participation in public affairs. There is no greater testimony to Bunting's personal influence and administrative ability than to state that his political views were substantially those which Methodism represented to the nation as distinctively Wesleyan Methodist. His achievement was costly, because the connexional liberals felt that they were unfairly muzzled. They argued justifiably that if there was to be a 'No Politics' rule then it should apply to everyone equally.

The main stimulus for the political anti-catholicism of the Wesleyans came from the missionary commitment to Ireland. The establishment of the Irish Mission in 1799 demonstrated the Methodist thesis that Ireland could not be helped by anything but a return to 'true religion'. The Act of Union in 1800 meant that the political problems of Ireland would have to be dealt with in a broader British context. In these two

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13 Joseph Wood to Jabez Bunting, 11 Aug. 1841. Ibid., p.267.

facts lay the core of the conflict between Methodism and Catholicism. In the 1830s Ireland became the guinea pig for England in matters relating to Church Establishment and education. The Wesleyans had already worked out their Irish politics and found it appropriate to translate their principles into the English scene. Those principles could be best maintained by supporting the Tories as opposed to the Whigs, especially when the latter brought O'Connell under their umbrella. The Wesleyan leadership was not averse to appealing to the Connexion's anti-catholicism to bolster its flagging Toryism. After all even the liberal elements did not like Irish Catholicism as can be seen from the non-Wesleyan magazines at the time of the Maynooth Bill.

In return for supporting Irish Methodism in its evangelical mission to the Irish Catholics, the Wesleyan Tories could count on Irish help in times of connexional difficulty. When the proposed Theological Institution was being discussed Thomas Waugh wrote to Bunting "that a deep and unanimous anxiety prevails to see the Institution commenced.... The resolution passed on the occasion I shall be prepared to present to your Conference".[14] Nevertheless, in general Ireland was more of a burden than an encouragement to the English Wesleyans. Financial and organisational dificiencies could be excused but the membership returns revealed the bitter fact that protestantism was losing the battle in Ireland. The wave of optimism which accompanied the Evangelical revival had to give way to realism. The typical Irish correspondence still came rolling in. As late as 1851 Waugh stated:

> "Oh, were political popery as promptly and strictly dealt with as political protestantism, matters would present a different aspect.... I wish the folks on your side the water would be

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14 Thomas Waugh to Jabez Bunting, 13 July 1834. Ibid., p. 41.

> taught that there is a protestant, as well as a popish Ireland, and not insist on mixing us up with all that we detest...."[15]

As time moved on there were less people within Methodism willing to listen to the apparently unchanging and insoluble Irish problems. In England protestant and catholic conflict became less important in the face of a growing secularism.

Wesleyan Methodist politics posed many questions for the Connexion at the time and for historians since. How could the Methodists demonstrate their loyalty and control radicalism without losing its evangelistic effectiveness among the lower orders? How should they fit into the traditional religio-political structure? On what basis can one separate a religious matter from a political one? How could the Wesleyans act powerfully 'as a body' without producing connexional disharmony? How could they apply the evangelical truism of hating a religious system while loving its adherents? These difficulties were bound to produce stress as the secessions demonstrate. This thesis has tried to show that by following one strand of a complex web light can be shed on all the rest.

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